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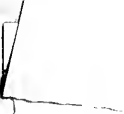
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HOW TO TEACH BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE

METHODS, MATERIALS AND ASSIGNMENTS
FOR TRAINING CORRESPONDENTS
AND LETTER WRITERS

BY

NATHANIEL WARING BARNES, A. M.

IN CHARGE OF COURSES IN BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE IN
THE SCHOOL OF COMMERCE AND ADMINISTRATION
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



A. W. SHAW COMPANY
CHICAGO NEW YORK
LONDON

SHAW BOOKS ON BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE

HOW TO WRITE BUSINESS LETTERS Tells how to write, paragraph by paragraph, almost every type of a winning business letter. Shows how to put *salesmanship* in your letters and arrange your facts in convincing array.

BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE After giving the principles of good business correspondence, this book develops the factors of correspondence in the various departments of a business, especially sales, complaints and collections. Emphasis is placed on inter-department and inter-house correspondence, index and filing systems and general office methods for handling correspondence

SALES CORRESPONDENCE Explains how to secure new business by mail. Gives details that make letters pull.

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THE BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE LIBRARY (*Three volumes.*) Complete principles and methods for successful business correspondence; with an analysis of actual specimen letters that fail.

HOW TO TEACH BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE Methods, materials and assignments for training successful letter writers.

A. W. SHAW COMPANY
CHICAGO NEW YORK
LONDON

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PREFACE

This book is designed to furnish those who train others to write business letters with effective methods, selected materials and suggestive assignments for vitalizing their instruction. The basic aim has been to indicate "how" rather than "what" to do. The final selection of materials, questions and problems necessarily varies with local conditions, but with the specific suggestions of this book at one's disposal, it should be easier to develop a course which will actually make students more successful correspondents and letter-writers. For here are ideas and methods that have already secured for many teachers and head correspondents effective results in training people for this important business activity.

Primarily this volume is intended as a companion volume to "How to Write Business Letters." It is published, however, with the hope that it will also prove helpful to correspondence instruction generally, both in schools and in business firms. To this end, a preliminary investigation of the problems of correspondence instruction in many schools of different grades and in numerous business firms was made, and the book then written to meet just those difficulties which during this investigation were observed to be troubling most teachers and corre-

spondence department heads. If this book aids, to some degree, at least, in overcoming these difficulties, the author and the publishers will feel well repaid for their efforts.

Grateful acknowledgment is here made for helpful criticism and advice to Walter K. Smart, head of the English Department of the Armour Institute of Technology, and lecturer on Business Correspondence in the School of Commerce of Northwestern University; W. Wilbur Hatfield, instructor in English in the Chicago Normal College; James H. Picken, sales specialist; and many others in both business and teaching whom it is not possible to mention individually. Those who have contributed valuable material are also too numerous for detailed mention, but the following firms deserve particular recognition for the full cooperation which they gave in the preparation of the book: The Crane Company, the Chalmers Motor Company, Joseph T. Ryerson & Son, Montgomery Ward & Company, and the Western Electric Company, Inc. Special acknowledgment is also made to the publishers and authors, to whom detailed credit is given in the chapter "Significant Paragraphs and Articles," for permission to reprint selections.

To all these who have helped to make this manual more complete and authoritative grateful recognition is now extended.

THE PUBLISHERS.

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Part One—METHODS

CHAPTER I

ANALYZING YOUR PROBLEM

WHEN STUDENTS are eager to learn, it is always a joy to teach. Such is the good fortune of most of those who teach business correspondence.

Whatever the pedagogical explanation of it—differentiation, motivation or something else—the simple fact is that courses in business correspondence which have the proper content almost invariably go well. This is especially evident to those who have taught other courses in English composition. For one thing, practically all students admit the importance of being able to write effective business letters. Most of them go further and connect this training with specific needs and ambitions of their own. The reality, the immediate practicality of the work, kindles interest. Because they are interested, they throw themselves into the routine of the training and self-development with spirit. They put more into such a course, and naturally they get more out of it. Since the teacher is not obliged to expend precious energy overcoming the resistance of indifferent or skeptical minds, he can render his fullest teaching service.

Favored as the teacher of business correspondence is by the eagerness of his students, his task is nevertheless far from easy and limited. This is because so much is involved in making the instruction adequate.

His primary concern, of course, is to train students to compose effective letters. Here, however, many teachers have realized but part of their responsibility, in that they have trained their students only in writing letters. In these days no one can be said to compose effective business letters who can not dictate them to a stenographer or a machine as well as write them down on paper.

ANOTHER IMPORTANT RESPONSIBILITY TO THE STUDENT

Along with this double training in letter composition the teacher can hardly escape responsibility for giving his students a mastery of letter mechanics, a fair knowledge of current business methods, and an essential understanding of approved business policies and ideals. These accomplishments are secondary, in a sense, and are often provided for by corollary business courses, but they never lie entirely outside the province of the teacher of business correspondence. Unless a student knows how to put a letter on the page attractively, and understands the most efficient ways of handling incoming and outgoing mail, and can base what he writes on sound principles, he can not be depended upon to write letters which are fully and permanently effective.

With any such full purpose in mind no teacher of business correspondence need ever apologize for his work or feel troubled over the attitude of those who disparage "bread and butter" courses and scorn "commercial English." It requires but little imagination or analytic power to see the large educational possibilities in the work of the teacher of business English.

Training young men and young women to write business letters which are fully effective involves training in accuracy, alertness, resourcefulness, clear and quick thinking, imagination, analysis, judgment. The student must acquire not only a direct and flexible style, but he must realize his own personality and learn to write himself into his letters. All this is certainly vital in an educational way. Why then should not the teacher of business correspondence feel the thrill of large opportunity?

SOME PEDAGOGICAL PROBLEMS ARE AVOIDED, STILL
THERE ARE MANY DIFFICULTIES

This vision of his work is really needed adequately to inspire the teacher of business writing, to keep him "gingered up"—for while he does not encounter some of the big problems which depress the teachers of other subjects, he does face plenty of difficulties. For instance, he often has to break down a false confidence on the part of students, especially those who have had some slight experience in the business world and have picked up a few stereotyped phrases which they can use glibly. As long as a student thinks it a very simple matter to write a business letter, he is most difficult to teach.

Furthermore, the teacher is sometimes obliged to work against the influence of the stilted, hackneyed letter, abandoned long ago by all first-class business concerns, but still used for practice work in many classes in stenography and typewriting. To have his students writing over and over letters which in most respects are the direct opposite of what the English teacher considers effective sets him a very serious psychological handicap.

A third difficulty arises in connection with standards. The teacher who is open-minded, and tries to harmonize his instruction with the best practice of the business world, is baffled again and again by the lack of standards, and the sharp conflict of opinion among business

men about letter form and letter style. Probably conditions will not soon be different in the business world in this respect, perhaps they can not be, but it does leave the teacher of business correspondence at a loss to know what he should teach and what the business world wants him to teach. This is not so serious when the teacher has had adequate experience in business writing; but few are so fortunate as to have this double training.

Whenever a teacher of business writing does lack practical experience as a correspondent or copy writer, a fourth difficulty is likely to come up. The less meek students will doubt the teacher's authoritativeness, and either disregard his precepts as foolish fussiness, or resist them as altogether too prim and bookish.

Greatest of all these difficulties, however, and practically a universal difficulty with teachers of business subjects, is the students' ignorance of business. The business of a letter can never be satisfactorily transacted unless the writer understands the transaction involved. Since few pupils have had any routine business experience, and many know next to nothing of business policy, they have to be given a foundation knowledge of business practice. Even when corollary courses in such subjects as office management and business organization furnish this necessary knowledge, the teacher of business correspondence is still responsible for its application to letter writing. To make this school-room knowledge of business methods and principles a satisfactory working equivalent for the knowledge gained through actual experience is indeed a task to test any teacher's ability.

With a definitely formulated purpose and a clear understanding of the difficulties to be met in working this purpose out, a teacher is, however, in a fair way to make his instruction effective. To analyze one's problem is the beginning of wisdom—for the teacher as well as for the business man.

CHAPTER II

MAKING YOUR TEACHING EFFECTIVE

AS SOON as the teacher of business correspondence comes to know his problem thoroughly, he is ready to consider ways and means. He can study the results of his own efforts, talk with his students after they have tested their training in the business world, exchange experiences with other teachers in his field, observe the practice of representative business concerns, and from all these sources gather suggestions for making his work effective. The essentials are an open mind and patience in testing out different plans and devices. No one, in all probability, has yet worked out a complete and perfect settlement of the problem.

In teaching students to write business letters it is necessary, of course, to explain to them how things are done, and why they are done better in one way than in another; in other words, to develop the theory of business letter writing. And this theory includes more than rhetoric; it should be a blend of rhetoric, psychology and business policy.

But teaching theory does not mean making that the principal part of the training. On the contrary, theory should be minimized in the case of all but mature students, and in every case held strictly subordinate to the development of practical skill. Furthermore, the theory should be kept simple, and it should be presented in

every-day language. Nothing is more likely to baffle the student—and to arouse suspicion in the mind of the practical writer—than the use of academic phrases which have no currency outside the school room.

Whenever possible, it is a good idea to quote from the instruction books¹ printed by large companies for the guidance of their correspondents, or from articles by well-known business writers.² Such statements are almost sure to be clear and incisive, and they always have great weight with students. A student may or may not be fully satisfied when his teacher objects to the mutilation of sentence syntax or the indiscriminate use of the participial construction at the end of a letter, but when the Chalmers Motor Company says in *Chalmers Letters*:

Do not leave out the subject of a sentence simply because the subject happens to be a pronoun such as "I" or "we"; that is, don't start off a sentence "Wish to advise," "Want to say," "Hope to be able to ship," or with a similar expression. Such expressions give a careless, sloppy tone to a letter. Say: "We wish to inform," "I hope to be able to ship."

and

avoid concluding paragraphs beginning with "Hoping," "Trusting," etc. They are common and often formal and stiff. Informal conclusions, characteristic of every day life, are better.

the most hardheaded student usually accepts the directions as authoritative.

For the same tactical reason it is wise for the teacher to supplement his own instruction with all the "shop talk" possible. Most "professionals," remembering their own early struggles, are interested in the "youngsters" and will take time from their work to give a little advice. If they are frightened by the idea of addressing a class, they will at least consent to be interviewed by

¹ See Chapter III.

² See Chapters IV and V.

a representative of the class, who, incidentally, will reap the extra advantage of practice in interviewing.

In this whole problem of theory, the ideal is to bring the student to see its value and feel its naturalness. He is no doubt familiar with the typical openings for a chess game. Why should he think it less worth while to analyze the problem of beginning a business letter? He talks naturally enough about the merits of the "squeeze play," or the "jack-knife" style of vaulting. Why should he not find it natural to discuss the pros and cons of "the whip," the long follow-up, or the "flush and hung" style of page make-up?

THE ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS OF READING ASSIGNMENTS

The reading assignments which the students are given to do outside the class room are ordinarily the simplest and most satisfactory means available for conveying the necessary information, not only about the technique of letter writing, but also about business methods and policies. Reading is often an inadequate substitute for actual experience, of course. Yet by reading the students can learn much about such subjects as the psychology of business procedure, sales management, advertising campaigns, buying methods, credit policies, and office appliances which will enable them to handle their correspondence problems more intelligently in school and out. From reading they can get a good idea of the place which truth, courtesy and service are occupying in modern business policy, and thus get the point of view essential to the writing of genuinely effective letters.

If a text book is used, it will be the natural base for such assignments, but it never should be the only reading assigned. Several references on the same subject are better than one, even if the ideas contained conflict to some extent. Should the instructor prefer to develop the theoretical side of the course himself instead of using

a text book, parallel readings should be given just the same. This student's statement is significant:

I found the readings assigned especially helpful. After reading those which gave directions and suggestions for writing certain types of letters, I found that I got better results in my writing with much less effort. This was often due to the fact that I had the points impressed on my memory by first hearing them in the class and then getting them again in the reading. When readings were not supplemented by lectures, I think that the improved results were due to the fact that my memory and imagery are visual rather than auditory and the readings were therefore easier to remember than the lectures. Since many people learn much more readily from reading than from hearing a lecture, I believe that more library work should be assigned.

Whether the students' reading is assigned from books or from magazines should depend on where the right material can be found. Much of the time it will appear in books, but the magazines which are edited for business men are rich sources. The articles which they contain are almost invariably up-to-date, practical, and readable. Many teachers require their students to follow at least one business magazine regularly, reading articles and advertisements alike, as far as they bear directly or indirectly on the work. They also encourage students to become subscribers at least during the school year, not only on account of the added interest and convenience which results, but because in this way the students can be interested in clipping and filing material which will be of use to them in later years. Thus the teacher can make his stone kill an extra bird.

Little machinery is needed to get the assigned reading covered, especially if it smacks well of actual business, but students often do need help in sifting out the really important points, in reconciling conflicting opinions, and in applying what they read to their own writing. For this purpose informal discussion in the class room, wherein students and teacher talk "shop,"

is felt by many to be nearer the ideal than formal reports, quizzes, or required notebooks. All these formal means compel a student to do a certain amount of work, but they often do not contribute much to his growth and perhaps spoil his attitude toward the subject. To do without them entirely, however, requires the highest degree of teaching skill.

OTHER METHODS FOR GETTING ASSIGNED READING COVERED

Other essentially natural methods consist of having each student write the substance of an article he has read to a friend who is supposed to be interested, adding some comment of his own which will draw his friend out; or appointing one student to interview an experienced business man in the community on a question raised by the assigned readings and then report back to the class; or assigning several capable students to investigate some phase of local business and thus supplement their readings with fresh facts. As far as possible, the practice work should be planned so that the students can immediately apply what they read to their own letters. In any event, the teacher's methods should be such that the students will welcome the outside readings because of their practical value, and not resent them as a form of unprofitable drudgery.

Every one realizes that skill in any art grows largely through imitation. Moreover, technique which is sound is derived inductively. Obviously, then, the teacher of business correspondence needs plenty of specimens.

It is important that his collection include letters of all kinds: good ones, mediocre ones, and poor ones; letters to collect money, adjust complaints, ask for information, refuse or acknowledge favors, give instructions, as well as sales letters; letters specially dictated, as well as form letters; letters sent to other employees of the house, to dealers, to customers, to competitors;

letters composed by those actually in business, and letters written by students to satisfy class room assignments.

Such a complete collection of specimens can not be brought together over night, but one can be assembled in a comparatively short time with the cooperation of students and friends in the business world. At least one teacher has found his pupils glad to cooperate in building up a large collection of business letters which has been made a part of the school's permanent equipment and is increased from year to year. The letters have been classified, filed and indexed so that reference to them is convenient.

HOW TO STIMULATE THE USE OF SPECIMEN LETTERS

Students can be given the necessary stimulus and guidance in their use of specimen letters by occasional written critiques and frequent oral discussions in the class room. Just as they come to talk naturally about the theory and the readings, they should get the craftsman's point of view and talk in shop terms about the examples of other writers' skill. Their observation can be focused on the right points if the teacher will give out topics which must be illustrated from the specimens under examination. It is important, too, for the teacher to make plain the difference between intelligent imitation of style and slavish copying. The one is the duty of all writers who want to perfect their skill; the other is a confession of weakness.

Additional equipment for the teacher of business correspondence should include vertical files or binders for the school's collection of specimen letters, a reference library of business books and magazines, and a dictating machine. It is highly desirable to require the students to typewrite their letters, but it is scarcely fair to do

so unless typewriters owned by the school can be placed at their disposal.

A duplicating machine can be used to great advantage in running off copies of specimen letters which are to be studied intensively. When the craftsmanship of these specimens is to be discussed in the class room in a detailed way, it is almost necessary to furnish the students with individual copies which they can look at throughout the discussion and mark up if they care to.

THE IDEAL WAY TO DISPLAY MANY SPECIMENS QUICKLY

Some teachers have found it worth while to have lantern slides prepared, especially to illustrate various aspects of letter mechanics; and some schools are equipped with machines for projecting letters on a screen. This is probably the ideal way of getting a large number of specimens before a class in a short time, and is an excellent way of making corrections effective.

Finally, there is the need of exhibits of all kinds in order that students may be better informed about the factors which at least indirectly concern every one who attempts to master business correspondence. For instance, exhibits of letterheads; styles of page make-up; paper stock; and appliances for addressing, duplicating, dictating, filing, opening, signing, folding, sealing, stamping and sorting are sure to be instructive. Some of these exhibits can be built up with the cooperation of manufacturers and dealers, and made the permanent property of the school; others can be borrowed by the school.

By all means the most important element in training for business letter writing is the practice work. One learns to swim by swimming, to sing by singing, and to write by writing. As in other arts, exercises are a useful, perhaps an essential, part of the practice work. Students should be drilled in an accurate use of words

and in finding synonyms. They should be given sentences to rewrite for greater directness or smoothness, paragraphs to rewrite for increased vigor and variety, and letters which are flat or discourteous to rewrite in more effective ways.

The main part of the practice work, however, is the writing of original letters. The assignments should be carefully graded according to difficulty and should cover the whole field of business correspondence.

SOME POINTERS ON THE SELECTION OF PRACTICE WORK

Whether the problems for this work are furnished by the instructor or chosen by the individual students should depend to a great extent on circumstances. In any event they should be real, not artificial; and they should lie within the field of each student's knowledge. The student who has sold aluminum ware in the summer or clerked in a clothing store on Saturdays, whose father is in the telephone business or owns a country newspaper, should do most of his writing in connection with familiar business problems which he meets in his everyday life. As the students grow in judgment and facility, they can be given training in handling letter problems in many different lines.

Nothing injects more life into classes in business correspondence and affords such ideal practice as the use of actual problems. When a student is going to drop the finished letter into the mail-box and measure its effectiveness by the response he gets, he will take an interest in his writing if he ever will. It is no longer make-believe, but a straight-out test of his ability to do a real piece of work.

Nearly all students have some occasion to write business letters for themselves or in connection with school enterprises. They should be encouraged to turn in copies of these letters as a part of their school work.

Sometimes parents and interested friends in business will give over their routine and less private correspondence problems to the students, and thus provide them with excellent laboratory work.

Occasionally, too, a local merchant or manufacturer will invite all the students in a class to submit letters for a given use and award a prize for the best work. These contests are usually welcomed by teachers, not so much because the prizes stimulate interest, as on account of the fact that they make the practice work as nearly real as possible.

No training in business correspondence is adequate unless it includes practice in dictation. Preferably the practice should include dictation both to a stenographer and to a machine. The problems used should not involve very long letters at first but the training must not stop with short ones, either. The students should keep a record of their time on this work and strive to approach the standards that apply in the business world.

One teacher has prepared the following suggestions for his students who are learning to dictate:

1—*Think out what is to be said beforehand.* Before beginning to dictate gather all the necessary data (addresses, facts, prices, and the like), go over previous correspondence, study the letter which is to be answered and its writer's frame of mind, and make notes on the points which should be covered in your letter.

2—*Concentrate on the letter problem while dictating.* Close your mind to outside stimuli. Hold it strictly to what you have to say and how you are saying it.

3—*Visualize the person addressed.* This will make for reality. As you dictate with a visual image of the person addressed before you, (a) you can better concentrate on the letter problem, (b) you can better adapt the content and tone of your letter, and (c) you can get more spirit and personality into your letter. This visualization is possible even when the writer does not know the reader personally—imagine a typical member of the reader's class.

4—*Study the results of your dictation.* Proof read all letters before signing them and sending them

out. Observe their weaknesses and faults, and then work consciously to eliminate them in subsequent dictation. Develop team work with your stenographer or transcriber.

5—*Common faults in dictated letters.* (a) Trying to dictate very long or very important letters; (b) getting lost in long, involved sentences; (c) repeating words and phrases monotonously; (d) inaccurate, loose phrasing; (e) changing the construction in an enumeration of points, as in this paragraph; (f) pronouns with doubtful antecedents, and verbs which do not agree with their subjects; and (g) verbosity.

The criticism of results, which is presupposed in connection with all practice work, should never be pedantic. Business letters are written not to conform to the rules of rhetoric but to sell goods, to collect money, or to gain good will. To tell a student that his letter lacks coherence or that his cadences are poor is entirely too academic. He should instead be told: "This phrase will antagonize your reader"; "This word suggests cheapness"; "It would be clearer to take up one of these points at a time"; "Make it easier for your reader to reply"; "You conceal your thought among words."

The criticism should always be adapted to the individual student, too, and this makes frequent conferences between student and instructor highly desirable. Of course the conferences take time and energy, but the results justify the effort.

The discussion of letters in the class room can also be made well worth the time it takes. Any student can profit by observing the way his letters impress his fellows, and the occasional student who is inclined to resist the teacher's criticism usually yields when he finds a good majority of the class judging his work in the same way.

It spurs the students on, and, incidentally, offers a wholesome check on the teacher's standards, to have the letters subjected now and then to the criticism of business men and expert letter writers. These people can

be depended on to get at business fundamentals and usually they do not mince their words, either. All criticism, whatever its source, should be vigorous and constructive if it is to be fully helpful.

By way of conclusion, here are five don'ts which one teacher of business correspondence puts to himself at least once a week. Anyone who absolutely avoids these mistakes can rest assured that his teaching service is effective: (1) Don't slight small business. Some pupils in every class, perhaps a majority, will not be concerned with "big business." (2) Don't get out of touch with the business world. (3) Don't stress knowledge as much as skill. (4) Don't stress style as much as judgment and business sense. (5) Don't take a limited view of your opportunities and responsibilities as a teacher of business correspondence.

Part Two—MATERIALS

CHAPTER III

TYPICAL INSTRUCTIONS TO CORRESPONDENTS

THE following selections from instruction books provided by large companies for the guidance of their correspondents are reprinted because of their high authority and clear, incisive style. They emphasize fundamental ideas about effective letter writing.

ABOUT THE CHARACTER OF LETTERS

From *The Writing of Good Letters for The Crane Company*

Reprinted by permission of the Crane Company

Every letter written and sent out by the *Crane Company* must be worthy of the character, traditions and standing of the house.

Many people know the Crane Company through correspondence only, and the conveyance of a good impression through a letter is of great value, while a poorly constructed one will have the tendency to give a customer the idea that the Crane Company's goods are poorly constructed.

It is, therefore, essential that every person who is entrusted with writing or dictating a letter bearing the

signature "The Crane Company" should be thoroughly imbued, not only with the Crane Company spirit, but with the necessity of mastering the art of easy, correct and convincing letter writing.

From *Letter Writing*

Reprinted by permission of Joseph T. Ryerson & Son

The ability to write a comprehensive and effective letter has become an indispensable requisite in the modern business world.

A letter is talk upon paper; but it is not as easy to write as it is to tell your story in spoken words, because when you talk, your audience is before you and you can better adapt your words to the receiver who is present than to one who is absent.

If what you say when you talk is not right and does not have the desired effect, you are likely to have an opportunity to explain. What you say in a letter must stand as it is, and is not subject to immediate change or correction.

Therefore, it is important that the letter be so worded and the appearance be such as to give the receiver a favorable impression.

From *Chalmers Letters*

Reprinted by permission of the Chalmers Motor Company

Never forget that the letters which go out from the Chalmers factory represent the Chalmers Motor Company. When you are writing a business letter the *company* is speaking through you. The recipient of the letter, perhaps, has never met a single person connected with the factory. He gets his impression of the Chalmers Motor Company from the letter which *you* write him. Hence, it is very important that the letters which go out shall be the best letters it is possible to write.

In a sense, all letters which go out from the factory are sales letters. We are in business to make sales.

Sales are the result of confidence. We gain the confidence of people by treating them right; by being courteous to them; by being accurate, straightforward, and honest in all our dealings. Not every person with whom we come in contact is a possible purchaser of a Chalmers car, but every one is a possible influence toward the purchase of a car. You never know when a word dropped by some one will mean the making or the losing of a sale.

We are able to employ help and pay salaries because people are willing to pay money for Chalmers cars. The salary of every person in this institution comes out of the sales of cars. If sales stop, everything stops. The object of every communication which goes out of this factory, therefore, should be the gaining and the holding of the confidence of the person to whom it is sent.

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS FOR CORRESPONDENTS

From Chalmers Letters

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Take pride in your work. Remember that it is important work. Remember, too, that in the work you are doing you have a big opportunity to learn. What you get out of a job is not merely the salary you are paid, it is not merely the money you can *earn*, but the things that you *learn*. Work as a correspondent or stenographer puts you in touch with many different phases of the business world. This sort of work well done always opens opportunities for higher positions and better pay.

Here are ten requisites of a good correspondent:

1—*Health*. To succeed in business nowadays a person must be at the top notch of efficiency. That means that health is a fundamental requirement.

2—*Honesty*. Any one in business nowadays who is not strictly honest has no chance at all

in the long run. Modern business has made honesty popular.

3—*Ability*. In order to be a successful correspondent a man must have a good mental equipment. He must have a keen mind, be a quick observer, constantly on the alert to improve himself mentally. He must be able to do things.

4—*Initiative*. There are three classes of men :

1—Those who do not need to be told to do anything.

2—Those who need to be told once.

3—Those who need to be told several times.

5—*Knowledge of the Business*. The importance of this requisite is obvious. You can not write intelligent letters unless you know what you are talking about. And the more you know about the automobile business and the Chalmers Motor Company, the better correspondent you will be.

6—*Tact*. Tact is a combination of good temper, courtesy and good judgment. Tact never offends, never excites jealousy, never treads on other people's toes. It is the good correspondent's most helpful aid.

7—*Courtesy*. The successful correspondent must have a pleasant disposition and a heart full of consideration for others. If he has these characteristics he will be naturally courteous, and natural courtesy is the best courtesy.

8—*Industry*. A man might have all the fine qualities in the world and still, if he were indolent, he would not be successful. "Always on the job" is one of the best things that can be said about any young man or woman in the business world.

9—*Openmindedness*. The best correspondents are those who are always trying to become better correspondents. They are the ones who are trying to learn and to improve. They are the ones with open minds.

10—*Enthusiasm*. What steam is to an engine or electricity to a motor, enthusiasm is to a man. It is the driving power, the energy that makes him go. You may have all the other qualities listed above and many others, but without enthusiasm you can never be a real success in anything you do.

PROMPTNESS

From *Chalmers Letters*

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Acknowledge all letters the day they are received. This should be an invariable rule. If a final answer can not be made to the letter the day it is received, at least acknowledge it that day and follow as soon as possible with a complete letter.

Don't keep letters "put away" in your desk. Attend to them. Do the hard ones first. They only get harder if you put them off. Lay a hard letter aside "till tomorrow" and you not only do not lessen the difficulty of that one, but make all of "tomorrow's" letters harder.

Run through your bunch of mail the first thing and pick out the *most important* letters and the ones hardest to answer and concentrate on them until they are satisfactorily handled. If answering them requires you to get special information, set out at once to get it—and get it straight before you start to dictate. . . .

Today is the most important day that ever was. Tomorrow when it comes will call for enough decisions of its own. The chances are that a decision made today about the letter you are tempted to hold will be as good as the one made tomorrow or next week.

“Procrastination is the thief of time”—and the chief enemy of success. So decide things that are up to you to decide. Act! Energize yourself. Get things done!

COURTESY

From *Letter Writing*

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Avoid being brusque and curt. Politeness is a recognized necessity in modern business correspondence. A well-rounded, courteous letter makes friends for the house, while an ill-advised communication, indicating indifference or exhibiting malice or antagonism, may result in loss of valuable trade.

All letters from this house are expected to be correct, concise and brief, but uniformly courteous and polite.

These qualities are to be desired above everything else, but a lot of mere politeness does not add to a letter, and is often overdone. There is a thoroughly polite way to be direct and yet avoid an abruptness which is displeasing or offensive.

From *Chalmers Letters*

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Courtesy, either in writing or in a personal interview, is something that draws men together quickly. It creates a feeling of mutual respect and contributes much toward the right adjustment of the world's difficulties. Courtesy is not merely manner. It is a state of mind and heart. It springs from a kindly, generous, sympathetic attitude toward people. You can not be courteous merely by using polite expressions. You must have a courteous feeling, have a generous regard for the other fellow, and then try to say what you have to say to him in the same kindly way that you would like to have it said to you. Discourtesy is responsible for a good share of business misunderstandings. No company and no individual is big enough to dispense with courtesy.

President Williams of the Chemical National Bank, New York, says this to all his employes: "Next to absolute integrity, politeness is of utmost importance. A grain of politeness saves a ton of correction."

Be courteous, but do not "smear it on." It is all right to say to a man, "I will appreciate it very much if you will do so and so." But when you say, "I would appreciate it very much if you will be so kind as to please do this," you are going too far. Know the difference between courtesy and "soft soap," and realize that "soft soap" is not appreciated out of its normal place. "Soft soap sounds as if it came out of a lye kettle."

PERSONALITY IN DICTATION

From a bulletin issued by the correspondence department of
Montgomery Ward and Company

Reprinted by permission of Montgomery Ward & Company

The correspondent was dictating a letter.

As he warmed up to his subject and began to drive home his arguments, his dictation came faster and faster until the stenographer's fingers were twinkling like the shuttle of a sewing machine. Finally he reached the climax:

"That," he declaimed, "is all you could expect of any machine. Can you ask for more?"

"No, sir," said the stenographer unconsciously, and then waited for more. That stenographer paid the correspondent the greatest tribute he ever received. She proved to him that he was writing a letter—a real, red-blooded, business-getting clinching argument. His very force and the interest he had put into his story had compelled an uninterested listener to answer his question involuntarily. He had dictated his letter as he would have talked to his prospect, and his stenographer, catching the inflection, had subconsciously placed herself in the position of the recipient.

How do you dictate your letters?

Do you shut your eyes, load yourself up with a lot of paragraphs and statements you have used so often in the past that they come out automatically, and then wander off fifty miles from nowhere while your unwilling vocal cords transmit to the cylinder on your machine a lot of pulseless, lifeless, literary clay?

Or do you put real thought into what you are dictating? Do you mentally project yourself into the living room of your prospect, do you "talk" to him as you would as if he were sitting before you? Do you argue, skillfully interject "reasons why," prove and convince, or do you try to hypnotize him with a lot of verbal foliage that means nothing?

When you dictate, TALK. Emphasize what you are saying. Make your letter sound real to your operator and it will sound real to the customer. Raise and lower your voice at the proper points instead of drilling along in a sleep-producing monotone that means nothing to the girl that writes your letters. She punctuates by inflection and as she follows your voice and puts in the proper punctuation marks, so will your prospect follow you intelligently, with interest and conviction.

Dictate so that your operator will know it is a live man at the other end of the tube—not a corpse.

HONESTY

From *Chalmers Letters*

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All really successful business is founded upon honesty. "A man in business nowadays is nothing short of a fool if he is anything but honest."

We want our letters to be *accurate statements of fact*. We want to live up to all promises that we make. We want to tell the truth. We are proud to say the public generally believes any statements the Chalmers Motor Company makes are true statements. We want to retain that good opinion, and every letter that goes out from the factory should strengthen it.

If you keep constantly in mind the desire of the company to be absolutely fair, your letters will sound honest. They will have the ring of sincerity.

WORDS TO BE AVOIDED OR USED WITH JUDGMENT

From *The Writing of Good Letters for the Crane Company*

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There follow a few of the words that are misused quite commonly in commercial correspondence. They are given here to illustrate the need for a study of words, their actual meanings and values, by those who would become masters in the art of letter writing:

DON'T WRITE

<i>Adopt</i> for take or decide	<i>Immediately</i> for straightway or at once
<i>Anticipate</i> for expect	<i>In</i> for into
<i>Apt</i> for likely	<i>In so far as</i> for so far as
<i>Appreciate</i> for value or price or increase	<i>Inaugurate</i> for begin
<i>Avocation</i> for vocation	<i>Individual</i> for person
<i>Balance</i> for rest or remainder	<i>Indorse</i> for approve
<i>Bring</i> for take	<i>Initiate</i> for start or begin
<i>Calculate</i> for likely	<i>Last</i> for latest
<i>Can</i> for may	<i>Lay</i> for lie
<i>Caption</i> for heading or title	<i>Lengthy</i> for long
<i>Character</i> for reputation	<i>Liabile</i> for likely or prone
<i>Cheap</i> for low priced or inexpensive	<i>Loan</i> for lend
<i>Claim</i> for assert	<i>Locate</i> for settle
<i>Commence</i> for begin	<i>Located</i> for found
<i>Complete</i> for finish	<i>Location</i> for place
<i>Consequencce</i> for importance	<i>Mutual</i> for common
<i>Consider</i> for regard	<i>Name</i> for mention
<i>Could</i> for might	<i>Nice</i> for good
<i>Couple</i> for two	<i>Nicely</i> for well
<i>Depot</i> for station	<i>Notorious</i> for notable
<i>Differ with</i> for differ from	<i>Observe</i> for say or remark
<i>Donate</i> for give	<i>Observe</i> for see
<i>Don't</i> for doesn't	<i>Over and above</i> for more than
<i>Each other</i> for one another	<i>Partially</i> for partly
<i>Excessively</i> for exceedingly or very	<i>Party</i> for person
<i>Fewer</i> for less	<i>Past</i> for last
<i>Graduated</i> for was graduated	<i>Patronage</i> for custom
<i>Have got</i> for have	<i>Per</i> for a ("a ton," "a day," not "per ton," "per day.")
<i>Hurry</i> for haste	<i>People</i> for persons
<i>If</i> for whether	<i>Perform</i> for do
<i>Ill</i> for sick	<i>Perpctually</i> for continually
<i>Illy</i> for ill (as an adverb)	<i>Portion</i> for part
(There is no such word as "illy")	<i>Posted</i> for informed
	<i>Present</i> for introduce
	<i>Preventative</i> for preventive

<i>Procure</i> for get	<i>Residence</i> for house or home
<i>Proven</i> for proved	<i>Retire</i> for go
<i>Purchase</i> for buy	<i>Section</i> for region, vicinity or neighborhood
<i>Quantity</i> for number	<i>Standpoint</i> for point of view
<i>Railway</i> for railroad	<i>State</i> for say
<i>Reliable</i> for trustworthy	<i>Universal</i> for general or all.
<i>Reply</i> for answer	
<i>Reside</i> for live	

ANSWERING INQUIRIES

From *The Writing of Good Letters for the Crane Company*
 Reprinted by permission of the Crane Company

The first essential of a good letter writer—a reasonable acquaintance with the mother tongue being granted—is a thorough grasp of the subject with which he is to deal. A mistake at this point will be fatal.

Many persons fail to grasp the questions which are asked. A careless view of these particulars is inexcusable, producing endless trouble.

Carelessness in the interpretation of a letter, dullness in comprehension, lack of concentrated attention, each and all cause blunders which may require several letters for correction.

We can not brook such sloth and sluggishness, even between the departments of our business, and such letters to customers bring still more deplorable results.

Let the questions asked be understood beyond the shadow of a doubt, and let the answer be clear, concise, correct. The importance of this increases measurably with the distance between the houses in correspondence, and the largeness of the transaction concerned in the correspondence, especially when time is an essential element.

When an inquiry is clouded in its meaning and seems to suggest varying and conflicting constructions, let time and correspondence be economized by sending answers in harmony with these differences, instead of saying, "We do not understand your wishes," thus compelling a second letter.

For example, let the answer read: "We do not understand clearly your inquiry, but if it is intended

to be _____, our answer is _____"; or "If you mean _____, we would say that _____."

As an illustration, one may have a request for the price of a certain size of pipe, and yet find the figures so obscure that he can not determine whether $1\frac{1}{4}$ or $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch (or some other size) is desired.

Instead of losing time for both the house and the customer, let the answer quote the price of both or several sizes.

Again: The customer may ask for prices of galvanized pipe and the accompanying fittings, but not state whether the fittings are to be plain or galvanized. Whatever the presumption, it will be well to give quotations for both kinds.

Use of these methods in answering letters will exhibit good sense and produce a good impression.

From *Chalmers Letters*

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Inaccuracy kills both time and business. If a man has waited several days for an answer to a letter and then you give him an incorrect answer, he is worse off than in the beginning. Get things straight.

FAULTS IN PHRASING

From *The Writing of Good Letters for the Crane Company*

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Avoid carefully such words and stock phrases as: "Beg to acknowledge," "beg to inquire," "beg to advise," and the like. Don't "beg" at all.

Avoid "the same" as you would a plague.

Don't say: "Inclosed herewith." "Herewith" is superfluous.

Don't "reply" to a letter; "answer" it.

Don't use a long or big word where a short one will do as well or better. For example: "Begin" is better

than "commence"; "home" or "house" than "residence"; "buy" than "purchase"; "give" than "donate"; "start" or "begin" than "inaugurate," and so on.

Don't try to be "funny."

Avoid carefully even the appearance of sarcasm.

Be wary of adjectives, particularly superlatives; "very," "great," "tremendous," "excellent," and the like have marred many an otherwise strong phrase and have propped needlessly many a good word, all-sufficient in itself.

Don't forget that certain small words are in our language for a purpose—"and," "a" and "the" are important, and their elimination often makes a letter bald, curt and distinctly inelegant.

From Chalmers Letters

Reprinted by permission of the Chalmers Motor Company

Avoid the expression "thank you in advance." There is no such thing as thanking a man in advance. You can not thank a man until he has actually done something for you. Besides, telling a man you thank him in advance often appeals to him as being presumptuous and discourteous.

Do not leave out the subject of a sentence simply because the subject happens to be a pronoun such as "I" or "we"; that is, don't start off a sentence, "Wish to advise," "Want to say," "Hope to be able to ship," or with a similar expression. Such expressions give a careless, sloppy tone to a letter. Say "We wish to inform," "I hope to be able to ship," and so on.

Avoid the use of the word "same" in referring to an article previously mentioned. Example: "We take pleasure in enclosing a copy of our '30' parts price list and trust same reaches you without delay." Say: "We take pleasure in enclosing a copy of our '30' parts price list and hope it gets to you promptly." "*Hope*" is a

better word than "*trust*" in this case; "*gets to you*" is a better expression than "*reaches you*," because "*reaches you*" should be used in describing a thing which has within itself power of movement, or reaching or going of its own will.

Be sparing of the expression "your esteemed favor." This is an old, wornout expression that dates back to the days when all correspondence was much more formal and stilted than at present. If one falls into the habit of using this expression he is sure to use it sometimes when it is really irony. In fact, it is doubtful if there is ever any real use for this expression in business correspondence.

Do not use the expression "the writer" in a letter. Use the pronoun instead. Do not be afraid to say "I" when it is right and natural to do so. There is nothing more offensive than a consciously assumed air of modesty—it is the height of immodesty. Be natural.

ENDING

From *Letter Writing*

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An abrupt close is not desirable, but it can be avoided without the use of such weak expressions as "I beg to remain," "Trusting this will be satisfactory," and the like. Sentences introduced by "trusting," "hoping," "believing," and the like are the weakest forms of construction and important ideas should never be expressed in this manner.

If the body of the letter is properly worded, such endings are generally superfluous and carry no real meaning to the receiver.

If some form of ending is necessary, make it a definite statement; for example, instead of "Trusting to receive your valued order, which will have our best attention, we remain," we suggest "Should you favor us with the order, we are in a position to give you

prompt service—Yours very truly,” or “We solicit your order and are confident our service will please you.”

From Chalmers Letters

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Avoid concluding paragraphs beginning with “hoping,” “trusting,” and the like. They are common and often formal and stiff. Informal conclusions, characteristic of everyday life, are better. There follow some good examples:

“We would thank you to write us by Monday, the 27th.”

“We suggest that you let us send you estimates, and the like.”

“We suggest that you call upon our dealer and see the new cars.”

“We hope that at some time in the near future we may have the pleasure of serving you again.”

“Please tell us just what will be most agreeable to you, using the enclosed stamped envelope.”

“In conclusion, we thank you most heartily for your loyal work and the gratifying results of your efforts.”

ADJUSTMENTS

From Chalmers Letters

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If you are going to do a man a favor, or give him an allowance, or make any concession of any kind, always make it to him in the first paragraph of the letter; then if you are going to do any arguing or explaining about it, or tell the man it is contrary to our policy and you are making an exception in his case, or anything of that sort, do it later.

Be courteous, sympathetic, and generous in letters dealing with complaints. If you have made a mistake,

be frank and manly enough to admit it, and do your best to correct it. If a mistake has been made and some one calls your attention to it, don't get on the defensive. Endeavor to find out the cause of the error and avoid a repetition.

CHAPTER IV

SIGNIFICANT PARAGRAPHS AND ARTICLES

The paragraphs and articles in this chapter, many of which are reprinted from sources not generally accessible, are selected because they contain ideas of value to the letter writer. Experience has proved that they can be used effectively to re-enforce other presentations of the theory of letter writing and can be made the basis for profitable class-room discussions of letter craftsmanship.

The variety of sources from which this material is taken suggests the great opportunity that the teacher of correspondence has in searching out fresh material.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF EFFECTIVE LETTER WRITING

By J. H. Picken, reprinted by permission of *System, the Magazine of Business*

A study—recently completed—of the tabulated returns from nearly forty million pieces of sales literature (letters, circulars, folders, and booklets) seems to offer convincing proof that there are certain fundamental principles which successful sales literature follows.

The fact that these rules are based on the returns from so many pieces of sales literature—both successful and unsuccessful—is in itself proof that they are not mere flash-in-the-pan statements of supposed principles. Moreover, a still further test has been applied—a psychological and highly scientific test. This test proves that the rules are basic, because each one of them, independ-

ent of the others, may be deduced from one central psychological process—the psycho-physical reaction.

The rules, which apply rather to the thought than to the way in which the thought is expressed, are six in number. Any one who has to judge the value of a business letter before it is mailed will find in them tools far more significant than his own individual preferences or dislikes.

1—Never assert in any way in your letter that which is debatable or untrue. In other words, never give the prospect a chance to argue, to doubt you, or to say “no.” Every sentence and paragraph is to be written so that the prospect must admit its truth. There is a danger, for instance, in saying “You are a busy man,” or “You have seen our letters.” You do not know these facts for certain. You can get around the difficulty by adding “doubtless” or a similar qualifying phrase, which makes your sentence absolutely true.

2—Never check or interrupt the steady flow of your prospect’s thought. An ambiguous statement, or a statement that has not been introduced logically earlier in your letter, does this. Do not allow these “breaks” in your letter. In the opening paragraphs, express or imply everything that the letter as a whole is to contain.

3—Make your letters easy to read. The idea is simple in practice, because all you have to do is to break your letter up into many paragraphs, separating long or tedious paragraphs with contrasting short and easy ones. But take care to have these short paragraphs packed with significant meaning.

Solid type on a page is, to the average reader, like a single long incline to the motorist. Short paragraphs, on the other hand, serve as rests and keep the reader’s interest alive and active.

4—In every letter, give or imply all the facts about your proposition that the reader could possibly want to know. Perhaps a better way to put this rule would be:

make clear, either by what you actually say or by what you imply, every service that your proposition is capable of rendering the prospect.

5—Avoid confusing the prospect by presenting to him a series of propositions from which he must make a selection. Avoid choice offers, in other words. The reason for this rule is a matter of psychology and will be discussed later. There may be cases where the writer will find he must make such offers, but it remains generally true that an appeal made on one issue alone is more effective than an appeal where the prospect has to make a choice. This can be proved by any one who cares to experiment. The way to avoid choice offers is a "list problem"—divide your prospects rather than your offer.

6—Make your letter portray advantages to be gained, instead of evils to be avoided. The reason is, so that the attendant feelings will be positive, rather than negative. In the business world it is perhaps easier to threaten and scold than to be constructive, just as it sometimes is in the nursery. But the best results come when you think out some positive benefit your prospect will receive when he does what you want him to do.

These, then, are the six principles. They cover the important aspects of letter writing. An explanation of the psychological processes on which they rest will help make them clear.

The underlying principle from which these six principles may be deduced, a principle which every letter writer will do well to keep in mind, is called the psycho-physical process or reaction.

In practice, to be sure, every sale, collection or adjustment, from the point of view of the prospect, is a complex process involving possibly hundreds of subsidiary psycho-physical reactions; but it is not necessary to go into that. It is enough to regard each one of these

series of processes only as a simple combination of three elements:

- (a) Nervous currents running into the brain (stimulus);
- (b) Brain excitation;
- (c) Nervous currents running out from the brain (discharge).

All this is physiological. There is in addition the consciousness which accompanies the brain excitation, but is not a part of it.

Now, what has this to do with the simple, everyday practice of writing sales letters that will get orders? Just this: every word and sentence in your letter, circular or advertisement should seek: first, to start one of these psycho-physical processes; second, to build it up slowly and carefully until the brain excitation is sufficient to break over and discharge in favor of your proposition.

When that happens, a sales letter results in a sale; a collection letter brings a remittance, or at least a response; an adjustment letter successfully handles a complaint.

So it is successful strategy to put into the sales letter whatever will hasten the development, and increase the extent, of this favorable brain excitation (and the corresponding mental ideas and feelings). On the other hand, poor salesmanship puts into the letter something that hinders this favorable psycho-physical process, or cuts off such a development entirely.

Take the first rule. It asserts, you will remember, that under no conditions should your letter contain a statement which the prospect can deny.

What happens—psychologically—when a prospect comes across a sentence or assertion that is not convincing? At once there arises in his mind a conflict, which is in reality an antagonistic psycho-physical process. The very existence of such a process, however slight, is

a detriment to the letter's chances; it hinders the development and completion of the first favorable process.

Only one idea can occupy the prospect's attention at any one instant, and when two or more ideas are pressing, they inhibit one another. The stronger the antagonistic process is, the less opportunity there is for the sales letter to succeed. In psychological terms, the favorable process is crowded out; no "discharge" is possible. In everyday terms, the prospect does not mail the order.

This is the reason why the letter writer must use extreme care to put in the mind of the prospect only such ideas as he wants to have there, and why he must guard against ideas which are opposed to his purpose.

USE IDEAS IN YOUR LETTER TO CREATE MENTAL PICTURES

To keep out of the reader's brain any process other than the one you wish to foster is not enough, however, to advance this desirable process. The ideas in the letter must actively excite his brain in the desired direction.

So you must put into your letter as much "meat" or "stuff" or "punch" as possible. That is, by words and phrases you must seek to develop mental images. If these word-images are properly chosen, they will pull up hosts of other associated images. These are all valuable in building up the favorable process towards the point of discharge.

There may be danger here, however. To guard against it, the second rule of correspondence comes into play. That rule, you recall, is not to allow "breaks."

By a "break" is meant any unusual phraseology which stops the prospect's flow of thought, or any new thought or idea which is unexpected because it has not been implied earlier in the letter. It is obvious that when such a break occurs, the mental process you have been striving to build up in your prospect's mind is broken down, and a new process has to be built up. In

other words, you have to start all over again to sell the prospect. Naturally, this works against your success. It is like throwing water on a fire you are trying to make burn.

The first two rules are negative. They point out grave dangers that always confront correspondents. They indicate the means that may be used to avoid retarding the psycho-physical process that is to terminate in the sale, the collection or the adjustment.

TO AROUSE YOUR PROSPECT'S THOUGHT
"USE A WHIP"

What are the positive things that help the process along—accelerate its development? The third rule is the answer: "Use a whip."

This principle should be understood in a double sense. On the one hand, it has to do with the physical structure of the letter. The letter ought to look easy to read. It should be so worded and paragraphed that it is easy to read, for solid type is uninviting and hard on the eyes.

But there is, on the other hand, a psychological reason for the rule. In exactly the same way that a whip stirs you up if you are hit by it, so the thought in your letter ought to stir up your prospect's mind. And snappy paragraphs always have this definite value if they summarize what has gone before, and prepare for what is coming. They are psychological "level grades"—a kind of mental breathing place. It is a significant fact that the most successful letters out of those studied had these "whips" in the largest number.

The fourth rule, like the third, is positive. I will repeat it for the sake of clearness: In every letter give or imply all the facts about your proposition that the reader could possibly want to know.

The idea, of course, is to make the amount of favorable brain excitement, and the mental excitement as well,

as large as possible. The more excitement there is, remember, the greater is the likelihood of the favorable discharge you wish for. In other words, if you get your man all worked up, you are more likely to receive the order.

So, if you get the interest of a prospect at all, the greater the number of favorable points you can bring to his attention the better. The limit of this policy, plainly, is the complete service your proposition can render. So this fourth principle is not merely helpful—it is basic.

Regarding the fifth rule, it has already been pointed out that it may not always be possible to avoid offers involving a choice. Take the catalogs which mail-order houses use, for example. Many of the articles listed could not be advertised separately, because of the relatively great expense. This is one case where it is not possible to follow the rule literally.

But in general the rule proves true, psychologically. Only one process can occupy the prospect's attention at one time. It obviously follows that a choice proposition requires consideration first of one offer and at a later moment of the other. In order, therefore, to consider two or more propositions the prospect must continually be shifting his attention.

Furthermore, when the final moment of choice comes, and the prospect weighs the various propositions you have put to him, a new law of psychology comes into play. This law brings out the fact that neither idea can become so clear and strong as either one of them might become by itself. The rule has been proved in practice as well as in psychological experiments, for sales propositions with choices and without choices have been tried out, and—other things being equal—the choice offer never does as well as one allowing no choice.

The last rule is slightly different from the others. You will recall that it suggests portraying in your letter

advantages which the prospect will secure if he takes up with your proposition, rather than portraying evils he will avoid.

Psychologically, what is the reason for this rule? Feelings, as well as mental images, are correlated to brain states. And, roughly speaking, pleasant feelings occur when the nervous currents running out of the brain discharge into the extensor muscles. Unpleasant feelings occur when the nervous currents discharge into the flexor muscles.

Everyday illustrations of this fact are numerous. "The glad hand," for example, is an open hand—open because the nervous discharges are going into the extensor muscles. On the other hand, clenched fists, a drawn face and a crouching figure are almost certain signs of the opposite kinds of feelings.

In general, these two kinds of feeling denote, respectively, the two attitudes which we call positive and negative. A positive letter is one that induces pleasant feelings; a negative letter one that induces unpleasant feelings.

And, of course, writing a check or signing an order in response to a sales letter, is a favorable action, accomplished only when the attitude is positive and discharges are going into the extensor muscles. Forcing an order from a prospect might be an exception. But you can not force orders by mail.

CLEAR THINKING

From *The Art of Writing English*

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By Arrangement with the American Book Company, Publishers

Many persons, either deliberately or through weakness, write without being clear in their own minds about their subject. Professor Bates puts it well: "Just as a beetle bangs his clumsy, thick head against a window or a netting in hope that he may chance to strike a place where he can get through to the lamp within, so the

June-bug writer goes banging absurdly down his page, bumping against any obstacle, trusting to fate and the chapter of accidents to show somewhere and somehow a way through." But what these persons write is always confused, if not chaotic. There is no reason to expect that what is so blurred in their minds will ever be sharply distinct for their readers. It may not be wise to say that once a writer has thought straight about his subject, the writing will nearly take care of itself, but effective expression does depend so much upon clear thinking that we may fairly insist upon the writer's having his material well crystallized in his own mind. Cobbett's rather blunt advice is thoroughly sound: "Sit down to write what you have thought, not to think what you shall write."

REACHING THE READER

From *The Art of Writing English*

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Brunetière has characterized the good writer as one who says all he means to say, says only what he means to say, and says it exactly as he means to say it; and Arnold Bennett has remarked that "the great convenience of masterpieces is that they are so astonishingly lucid." And yet this quality of transparency, this "electric communication from writer to reader with the least possible resistance," is by no means easy of attainment. Anyone who has had the slightest experience with serious composition knows that the English language can prove itself a very stubborn and even inadequate medium. To succeed at all in presenting his material, a writer must have a devotion to clearness amounting almost to a passion. He insists on eliminating all obscurity, not alone because he craves exact self-expression, but also because he wants to convey his idea to his reader with the utmost accuracy and lucidity. And to attain this crystal clearness he is willing to take infin-

ite pains. He will hold himself to the closest thinking. He will wrestle with the language to make it convey his meaning unmistakably. But more than all else, he will strive to understand his reader. The very foundations of clearness lie in intelligent sympathy. When by conscientious endeavor he can take his reader's point of view, think with his reader's mind, and realize the interests which grow out of his reader's experiences, his writing will go straight to the mark.

PERSONALITY IN WRITING

From *Representative Men*

By Ralph Waldo Emerson

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It makes a great difference to the force of any sentence whether there be a man behind it or no. In the learned journal, in the influential newspaper, I discern no form; only some irresponsible shadow; oftener some moneyed corporation, or some dangler who hopes, in the mask and robes of his paragraph, to pass for somebody. But through every clause and part of speech of a right book I meet the eyes of the most determined of men; his force and terror inundate every word; the commas and dashes are alive; so that the writing is athletic and nimble—can go far and live long.

PERSONALITY IN CORRESPONDENCE

From *Personality in Business*

By C. L. Pancoast

It may safely be said that every salesman who actually gets business does so by bringing into play his personality. A letter—a written communication between buyer and seller—must have personality like that of a human salesman to get tangible results.

In the first place personality in correspondence means being natural. Talk to your customer as you would if you were face to face with him. Get away from the conventional way of letter-writers. How can you expect your letter to accomplish anything in particular

if you use the same forms, the same phrases, the same hackneyed expressions, which letter writers in general use to an almost criminal excess ?

Don't generalize when you can say something specific; don't go away up in the air and use big words when you can stand on a level with your customer and talk to him in his own words. Don't make him feel as though you were addressing him from some ice-clad mountain top.

However, personality in a letter means more than just being natural. A letter may be natural and yet be insulting or mean. But the letter that creates a feeling of personal interest must be polite and cheerful.

If anything is worth saying at all, it is worth saying cheerfully. If you have something to offer to your customers, make them feel your confident smile. A cheerful order comes quickly, and it is the cheerful letter that gets the cheerful order. Talk cheerfully, for most people know that only success can afford to smile.

Personality in every letter depends on your ability to study the man to whom you are writing. You should study his letter until you have some definite idea what kind of a man you are dealing with. If his letter irritates you, don't come back at him with a hot-headed reply. Wait until you can view the matter coolly and calmly. Remember that your customer may have perplexing problems and troubles which you know nothing about. When you answer unfriendly letters, do so in a friendly, cheerful manner. Try to get inside his little world and get his confidence, so that when he is ill-humored or cranky you will know how to handle him tactfully.

Attractiveness of personality is merely a compatibility of words, the maintaining of harmony in ideas and points of view. Of all business disasters, the greatest is to lose your temper and then make a record of

that loss in a letter. It is your personality in a letter that strengthens the bond of sympathy between you and your customers.

FINDING THE WORD THAT SELLS

By W. C. Holman

Reprinted by permission of *System, the Magazine of Business*

Say "fire" to me and it is only the fact that my memory holds specific images of certain definite fires that enables me to understand you. Say "furniture" to me and it is only the fact that my memory holds specific images of certain desks, chairs, tables, pictures, and so forth, that enables me to understand you.

Specific images of individual things are the raw material of thinking. It is only the trained mind—usually the learned mind—that can think in terms of generalization; and even such a mind is enabled to think merely because it can marshal better and classify better the flood of specific images which a general word brings up in thought.

The more general a word is the less vivid it is; the less apt it is to attract attention, arouse interest. The same is true of general statements.

For a powerful specific statement, powerful words must be chosen.

Great students of mankind have said that almost every human trait finds its analogy in the animal world. Thus, there are men as cunning as foxes, men as fierce as tigers, men as treacherous as hyenas, men as greedy as hogs, men as ravenous as wolves. There are men with the fidelity of dogs, men with the strength of lions, men with the servility of jackals.

Did you ever stop to think that similar comparisons can be made of words?

Words are almost living things. There are weak words and strong words, pallid words and red-blooded words, words that are dull and words that are diamond-pointed, words that soothe and words that smart and

burn like vitriol. There are words as splendid as precious gems, words as smouldering beautiful as the eyes of a sullen harem favorite. There are words as scorching as fire, words almost incandescent with heat and light—words that seem to have dropped hissing upon the page that holds them. There are words as dreadful as murderers, words that boil and swirl with meaning as dark as the black broth of a witch's caldron.

And so in business there are all varieties of words for an advertisement writer's choosing. There are efficient and inefficient words—words worn out, commonplace, flat as dish water, words that have as little character as the average insignificant face in a crowd—strong, startling words that compel attention as a man of striking personality draws the eyes of passers-by upon the street. There are words as shallow as a pie-pan and as meaningless as an idiot's chatter—words packed as tight with meaning as a machine-pressed cotton bale—words as evasive as eels—words as straightforward and direct as a musket fire—words as plain as old dog Tray—words as pretentious as the sweep of a peacock's train—words as sweet and simple as a May morning.

No matter what product you wish to describe, there are image-making words that will make the product fairly live in the imagination. There are words for use in describing food that will make the mouth water. There are words as dainty and filmy as the lace on a woman's dress. There are words for every product—every idea. It is with words that the advertisement writer works. He should have an eye, therefore, for the slightest shades and variations in their meaning. The average heading for an advertisement contains only four, five or six words. The human eye can take in but four words at a time. The matter of choice of words is vital in an advertisement; it makes or mars it. Five or six ill chosen words—and the reader's attention wavers, strays,

ceases entirely. The remainder of the advertisement is wasted.

Every well-written sentence should seem as complete as a circle, as compact as a brick. Its parts should be as carefully chosen and put together as the parts of a watch. Every word in it should be the "inevitable" word—the one word out of all the language which will best fill the place where it is used.

Ruskin, that great master stylist, was once observed by a friend at his desk, chin upon his hands—absolutely silent. "What are you doing?" asked the friend.

"Hunting for a word," said Ruskin. "I've been searching my brain for it for fifteen minutes. I have got a dozen that will do, but there is only one right one, and I haven't found it yet."

DYING—THE STOCK PHRASE

From *The Western Electric News*

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It was a wise man who said in a magazine the other day: "Business letters must improve in character if they are to keep pace with the improvement in other branches of business development."

They must, indeed. Even now the day of the typewriter, loaded with business jargon and set forms, made uninteresting and colorless by thickly sprinkled "*beg to state*"s, "*yours of the fifth ult. at hand*"s and "*contents carefully noted*"s—has passed to the backwoods of our mercantile world. The demands of the day are for crystal-clear, conversational English—with just as much personality and natural force in them as the writer can possibly command.

"When I was a boy and people would talk so I couldn't understand them," Abraham Lincoln once said, "it used to make me downright *mad*. I made up my mind that when I talked or wrote I would make people understand me."

And Lincoln did—because he took pains to address people directly and simply; and when he wrote, he *made believe he was talking*.

Nail the application to the sales letter, the department circular letter or the inter-house letter, and observe the result. The letter that starts out boldly with a direct question, a sharp concise sentence or a chatty greeting—just the way you are used to being approached in conversation a hundred times a day—wins out. It is human and unconventional, therefore interesting. But the stock-phrase letter, the kind that revels in formalities and alleged “business English,” falls by the wayside. Like a man with a dull, monotonous voice, you scarcely listen to it.

The stock-phrase—deadener of business letters—is dying. And it is a funeral that all live men of this age should be glad to attend.

“EST”—THE TROUBLE-MAKER

By Richard H. Waldo

Reprinted by permission of *Good Housekeeping*

If some genius will invent a pen that will balk, splutter and retire from business rather than trace the little syllable “est” we will gladly buy a few dozen of the article, gold-mounted, and present it to various people who write advertisements. Doing so will save us the necessity of returning to their authors, for revision, advertisements bristling with “greatest,” “cheapest,” “finest,” “purest”—and above all, with “best.”

One of *Good Housekeeping*’s fixed rules is not to admit advertisements which apply superlatives to the product advertised. This rule has cost us many a dollar, for not every advertiser will amend his manuscript. We ask him, “Suppose, at the same time we print the statement that your machine is the best, some other concern, making a similar apparatus, advertises with us that theirs is best? Where does that leave us, for con-

sistency—we who absolutely guarantee every claim our advertisers make?" The reply often is, "Yes, but mine is the best." It matters not that housewives, comparing and pricing the two devices, buy the other as often as his—his is still the best!

I never met a manufacturer in my life who said that he made the "second best" article of its kind on the market! I never expect to. But I think that if such a *rara avis* should turn up, and advertise his product as "second best," the startling, the revolutionary frankness of the thing would sell his goods—because it would establish his truthfulness on such a Washingtonian basis that in the next breath he might claim almost any other merit for his goods and be believed.

If one advertises that an article is healing, delicious, economical, light, durable, nickel-plated, antiseptic, or anything else that is definite, the mind can grasp the claim, weigh it and act on it. But what does "best" really mean? Best for whom? For what? Isn't it about as inept as the "best best" occasionally used by frenzied advertisers?

You open a magazine at random, see the name of a soap more or less unknown to fame, and are told it is the "best soap made." Of all the hundreds of soaps devised by man's skill in centuries, you just happen to have learned of the supreme detergent of them all! You feel as Madam Curie felt when she discovered radium—or, if you are like most of us, you breathe "piffle!" and turn the page.

The genius who wrote of his soap "It floats" knew the art of persuasion better.

This magazine has associated with it trained experts, among them Dr. Harvey W. Wiley, who test scientifically the things we advertise. With all their help, we have never found a product that we felt sure was the "best," "greatest," "purest," "finest," nor any other "est."

We know hundreds that are a splendid buy at the price : these we advertise.

When great scholars settle on what are the hundred "best" books, when parties no longer wrangle about whether tariff or no tariff is "wisest," when the critics reach some unanimity that either Dickens or Thackeray was "greatest"—we will recall "est," the trouble-maker, from exile. Until then superlatives are banned—"for the good of the service."

JUDGMENT IN THE USE OF WORDS

From *The Art of Writing English*

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The skillful use of words is chiefly a matter of good judgment. Few words are inherently bad ; we cannot say of very many that they should never be employed. It is true that we sometimes see rigid classifications of "good English" and "bad English," but they are so artificial and so thoroughly antagonistic to the very nature of the words in a living language, that they afford little help and often result in much confusion. It is better to look upon words as we look upon people: some are for intimate friendship, others for pleasant acquaintance, others for business association, and still others for the merest formality that exists between persons whose interests are widely different, but whose lives are occasionally brought together in some passing relation. We are not to look upon one word as being just as good as another. Steadily we push some farther and farther into the background until we rarely, if ever, are prompted to use them. Others do not so nearly approach disappearance, yet we exclude them from habitual use. But they are not excluded because somebody has said arbitrarily that they ought to be; they are excluded because they are not well suited to perform service in the most usual kinds of communication. Virtually all these words fall under two heads (1) those not understood or misunder-

stood; (2) those likely to make an unfavorable impression.

PUNCTUATION

From *Marginalia*

By Edgar Allan Poe

That punctuation is important all agree; but how few comprehend the extent of its importance. The writer who neglects punctuation, or mis-punctuates, is liable to be misunderstood; this, according to the popular idea, is the sum of the evils arising from heedlessness or ignorance. It does not seem to be known that, even where the sense is perfectly clear, a sentence may be deprived of half its force, its spirit, its point, by improper punctuation. For the want of merely a comma, it often occurs that an axiom appears a paradox, or that a sarcasm is converted into a sermonoid. There seems to exist a vulgar notion that the subject is one of pure conventionality, and can not be brought within the limits of intelligible and consistent rule. And yet, if fairly looked in the face, the whole matter is so plain that its rationale may be read as we run.

FUNCTION OF THE DASH

From *Marginalia*

By Edgar Allan Poe

Without entering now into the why, let me observe that the printer may always ascertain when the dash of the Ms. is properly and when improperly employed by bearing in mind that this point represents a second thought—an emendation. In using it just above I have exemplified its use. The words “an emendation” are, speaking with reference to grammatical construction, but in apposition with the words “a second thought.” Having written these latter words, I reflected whether it would be possible to render their meaning more distinct by certain other words. Now, instead of erasing the phrase “a second thought,” which is of some use, which partially conveys the idea intended—which

advances me a step toward my full purpose—I suffer it to remain, and merely put a dash between it and the phrase “an emendation.” The dash gives the reader a choice between the two, or among three or more expressions, one of which may be more forcible than another, but all of which help out the idea. It stands, in general, for these words, “or, to make my meaning more distinct.” This force it has, and this force no other point can have; since all other points have well-understood uses quite different from this. Therefore the dash cannot be dispensed with. It has its phases, its variation of the force described; but the one principle—that of second thought or emendation—will be found at the bottom of all.

THE ART OF LEAVING OFF

From *Days Off*

By Henry Van Dyke

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There is a psychological moment at which the song has made its most thrilling impression, and there the music should cease. There is an instant of persuasion at which the argument has had its force, and there it should break off, just when the nail is driven home and before the hammer begins to bruise the wood. The art lies in discovering this moment of cessation and using it to the best advantage.

CHAPTER V

BIBLIOGRAPHY

This is a bibliography of articles and books in which it is believed the teacher of business correspondence will be particularly interested. Besides a full list of references to material about business letters, some of the more important material on business methods has been listed, for it is a common experience among instructors that prospective correspondents and letter writers generally have little knowledge of business practice. Local conditions, of course, will dictate from what books it is advisable to assign supplementary readings, but generally these should cover the three great fields of business activity—production, distribution and administration.

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Part Three—ASSIGNMENTS

CHAPTER VI

GENERAL

INFORMATION TESTS

Here are questions which many firms ask applicants for correspondence department positions. Any or all of these questions may be put to students at the beginning of a course in business correspondence to test their general information, and be used later to measure their progress. The teacher may give out the answers or put it up to the students to find them for themselves as accurately as possible.

- 1—For what do the following abbreviations stand: B/L, agt., C. O. D., cwt., F. O. B., frt., inv., L/C, mdse., N. P., pkg., ult., W/B, wt., ret'd.? ¹ When may such abbreviations be properly used in business letters?
- 2—Name five books on business correspondence; seven books on other phases of business; three good English dictionaries; two of the best dictionaries of synonyms.
- 3—Explain "Office Appliances," "Corona," "Bradstreet's," "Postal Guide," "Caveat Emptor," "Automatic Index."
- 4—Name four means of communication commonly used in business.² How does the letter compare with each of the others in point of serviceableness?
- 5—How many classes of domestic mail are there? Explain each.³
- 6—Under what conditions may post cards and stamped envelopes be redeemed?³
- 7—When is the affixing of stamps on mail matter unnecessary?³
- 8—How much does it cost to have a return card printed on government envelopes? How many must be ordered at once when this printing is desired? What restrictions does the government make on the matter it will print?³

¹ See the Business Man's Encyclopedia (A. W. Shaw Company, Chicago), Vol. 2, pp. 345-48.

² Letters, telegrams, telephoning, personal interviews.

³ See "Postal Information," a booklet distributed free by the Government.

- 9—What requests does a post office make of business offices handling a large volume of mail?³
- 10—What are the three main styles of letter page make-up?⁴ What points should be considered in adopting one?
- 11—In what way is it proposed to shorten the beginning and ending of business letters? Why? Why has the business world been slow to take these short cuts?⁵
- 12—What is the policy of most large business concerns on the addressing of letters dealing with company business to employees? How can such a letter be brought to the attention of the desired individual?
- 13—Why is the phrase “dictated but not read” sometimes used at the end of business letters? What are the arguments against its use?
- 14—Give the trade names of five well-known papers suitable for business stationery. What are the characteristics of a good bond paper? What is a reasonable price for good bond stock?
- 15—What should be considered in selecting the paper for business stationery? What possibilities are there for the use of color in letter paper?⁶
- 16—What can be gained by departing from the regular size of business stationery? What holds the business world for the most part to sheets of regular size?⁷
- 17—What advantages can be urged for the use of window envelopes? What can be said against their use for business letters? What restrictions are placed on their use by the Government?⁸
- 18—Name five well-known firms selling office furniture.
- 19—Name and explain five systems of filing letters.⁹
- 20—Name two types of addressing machines with at least one example of each.¹⁰
- 21—What advantages are claimed for dictating machines? What objections raised? Name the leading dictating machines now on the market? How much dictation does a cylinder hold? How many times can a cylinder be shaved?¹¹

³ Indented, flush, flush and hung.

⁴ Various efficiency experts have proposed omitting (1) all punctuation; and (2) the salutation and complimentary close. The chief reason urged is economy. The business world hesitates to break with convention and to risk apparent discourtesy.

⁵ (a) Materials, weight, finish, size, color. (b) Differentiation, attention, expressiveness.

⁶ (a) Attention value, distinctiveness, impressiveness. (b) Convenience in filing, economy in cutting, conservativeness.

⁷ (a) Economy, accuracy. (b) To many people they suggest cheapness and lack of interest; restricted freedom of letter page make-up. (c) Position of window and color of letter paper fixed.

⁸ Alphabetic (name), geographic (state and town), topical (subject), numeric (arbitrary numbers), automatic (combination of alphabetic and numeric).

⁹ Fiber stencil and metal stencil.

¹⁰ Consult sales literature of leading manufacturers of dictating machines.

- 22—Name three types of duplicating appliances, with two examples of each. What is the approximate printing capacity of appliances of each type? ¹²
- 23—How much does it cost to address a thousand envelopes by hand? With a typewriter? With an addressing machine? How much does a stencil cost? ¹³
- 24—What should be included in calculating the cost of a letter? What is a reasonable cost for a business letter, figuring on this basis? ¹⁴
- 25—How many letters averaging three-quarters of a page can be dictated in an hour? How many typed? What is a fair volume of work per day when a dictating machine is used? ¹⁵
- 26—From what sources can names for mailing lists be derived? What is involved in the proper care of mailing lists? ¹⁶
- 27—What are the essentials of a good credit system? What are the most important sources of credit information? ¹⁶
- 28—What are the minimum and maximum salaries ordinarily paid to correspondents in the business world? What are the best ways of getting a position as a correspondent?

¹² Gelatine or clay film devices, all flat-bed; stencil machines, wax or dermatype; type-setting machines. Consult sales literature of leading manufacturers.

¹³ (a) Various estimated at from \$1.25 to \$3.00. (b) Various estimated at from \$1.50 to \$2.50. (c), (d) Consult sales literature of leading manufacturers.

¹⁴ The item often omitted is the time of the person dictating.

"Statistics gathered from all sections of the country and time studies made in all kinds of offices, including well-known law offices, where the highest cost was found, disclosed the fact that the maximum cost was thirty-nine cents a letter, the average cost eleven and three-quarter cents, disregarding the exceptionally low or high prices, and the minimum four and one-quarter cents, the latter figure being secured with the aid of dictating machines. These figures are exclusive of postage."—*The Efficiency Magazine*, July, 1914.

¹⁵ (a) When thought out in advance, 25-40. (b) Range, 12-20; letters usually typed about half as fast as they are dictated. (c) Range 100-150 letters in an eight-hour day. See *The Efficiency Magazine*, July, 1914.

¹⁶ Consult Bibliography in Chap. V.

CHAPTER VII

EXERCISES

These exercises are based on "How to Write Business Letters" (A. W. Shaw Company, Chicago) and can be used to best advantage in connection with that book. However, most of the questions and problems will fit in well with any class work.

CHAPTER I

- 1—What change is traceable in the tone of recent business correspondence?
- 2—What effect has this changed tone had on the effectiveness of the letter as a means of transacting business?
- 3—How does the letter compare for serviceableness with other means of communication used in business, such as the telegraph, the telephone, and the personal interview?
- 4—Comment on the following: "Getting this personal tone in a business letter is largely a matter of showing a personal interest in the customer and his affairs."
- 5—What substitute has been found for knowing all one's customers personally?
- 6—Where can one get the information necessary to decide on the type to which a customer belongs?
- 7—Enumerate some of the stereotyped phrases and words which lessen the effectiveness of business letters.
- 8—What attitude should a business correspondent take toward the use of the pronoun "I"? Justify your answer.
- 9—Submit five business letters which you think begin effectively, and tell why they seem good to you.
- 10—Submit five business letters which you think end effectively, and tell why they seem good to you.

CHAPTER II

- 1—What do you think of the business man who never "bothers his head" about the appearance of the letters going out from his office?

- 2—What do you think of the business man who tries to make his letters “original” in make-up?
- 3—What are the chief factors involved in selecting business stationery?
- 4—What is the regular size for business letter sheets? What can be gained by departing from this size? What holds the business world for the most part to sheets of the one size?
- 5—What are the characteristics of a *good* bond paper?
- 6—What are the essentials of an effective letter head?
- 7—What should be considered in selecting the size of a business envelope? In determining what shall be printed on the envelope?
- 8—Show by diagrams three typical ways of making up a letter page.
- 9—How can the treatment of margins be made to contribute to the effectiveness of business letters?
- 10—Why are purple typewriter ribbons in such general use? Are they in the best taste when the letter head is printed in colors? When colored letter paper is used?
- 11—What does neatness require in business correspondence?
- 12—What points are involved in standardizing the form of a business letter? What are the chief reasons for such uniformity? In what kind of letters are departures from the standard most often allowed? Why?

CHAPTER III

- 1—What have letters of introduction, recommendation, and reference in common?
- 2—In what sense may a letter of application be considered a sales letter?
- 3—What information should ordinarily be included in a letter of application?
- 4—Explain what you think is a wise way to use references in connection with letters of application.
- 5—How can the reference letter be made efficient?
- 6—What are some of the common weaknesses and faults in letters of recommendation?
- 7—Name four ways of sending a message by telegraph.
- 8—Submit a letter of inquiry which you think effective and justify your selection.
- 9—What does the reader want in a letter replying to an inquiry?
- 10—Name as many sources of credit information as you can and comment on their relative value.
- 11—Explain the three elements usually necessary in a letter ordering goods.
- 12—What kinds of letters are likely to be written in connection with purchasing goods? Acknowledging orders?
- 13—A is a banker in Blank City; B is one of his bookkeepers who is forced by his wife's health to seek a position in a more favorable climate; C is a banker in Second City. Write a general letter of recommendation such as A might give to B when B leaves his employ.

- 14—Write A's letter introducing B to C, assuming that C is a convention acquaintance of A's.
- 15—Write B's letter of application for a position in C's bank.
- 16—Write C's reference letter to A about B.
- 17—A student (A) is considering the purchase of a rebuilt typewriter and writes to the manager of a typewriter exchange in a neighboring city (B) for information. B's letter is satisfactory and A decides to purchase one of B's machines if he can arrange for installment payments. When he learns that B is willing to accommodate him in this way, A orders a typewriter for immediate delivery. B acknowledges the order, but explains a necessary delay of a few days in shipment. Write the six letters involved in this business transaction.

CHAPTER IV

- 1—What is the strategic importance of effective adjustment letters in business?
- 2—What are the commonest occasions for complaints? Are they inevitable in a well-conducted business?
- 3—Classify business complaints according to the action taken on them, and explain the attitude which the writer of adjustment letters should take toward the reader in each case.
- 4—What cautions would you give an inexperienced business correspondent about handling complaints?
- 5—What three things are ordinarily to be said in an adjustment letter? In what order will they be said?
- 6—Which letter reprinted in this chapter do you consider the most effective? Why?
- 7—Comment on the phrase "making capital out of complaints."
- 8—Are customers likely to take advantage of a generous adjustment policy?
- 9—Do you know any business men who actually welcome complaints from their customers? Why do they?
- 10—How does the character of the product sold and the selling method affect the policy adopted toward the adjustment of complaints?
- 11—How might the length of an adjustment letter vary in the case of (a) slight trouble; (b) wholesale or retail customer; (c) serious trouble; (d) angry customer; (e) valuable customer?
- 12—Make the following clear by illustration: "Some adjustment letters are in reality the most difficult kind of sales letters; they involve reselling the article when the customer's mind is set against it."
- 13—Adjust a young woman's complaint over a serious delay in the receipt of a chafing dish which she ordered by mail, assuming that your firm has been responsible for this delay.
- 14—Adjust this customer's complaint, assuming that your firm is not responsible for the delay.

- 15—Write a letter to a good customer who is incensed over a clerk's refusal to exchange goods which it is contrary to the policy of the store to take back.
- 16—Write a letter to a young man who has complained about a new fountain pen. At the time you are not able to determine whether the pen left your factory in imperfect condition, or was damaged in the mails, or is poorly suited to the young man's hand.

CHAPTER V

- 1—What is the vital difference between the sales letter and the collection letter?
- 2—Which do you find it more difficult to write? Why?
- 3—How does the writing of collection letters test one's knowledge of human nature?
- 4—The personal solicitor vs. the letter for collections; the form letter vs. the individual letter.
- 5—Has the writer of a collection letter any other responsibility than to collect the money due? What?
- 6—What attitude do you consider the right one to take in writing collection letters?
- 7—Wherein is it dangerous to use the "hard up" plea in collection letters?
- 8—Do you think it is ever wise to ask payment as a favor?
- 9—How can one make collection letters win or hold the customer's good will without sacrificing firmness?
- 10—What are some of the arguments that can be used in urging prompt payment?
- 11—Name some personal appeals which are often effective in collection letters.
- 12—What can be done to make the act of paying easy for the debtor?
- 13—Analyze a collection letter (or series) not printed in this chapter to show the presence or absence of the seven elements named in the text.
- 14—Under what circumstances would you use the following paragraphs:
 - (a) "A man who keeps an account paid up feels a certain satisfaction in dealing with that concern. He feels that he is a privileged person, always welcome. If he lets the account lag, there is an irresistible temptation to go elsewhere for his supplies until the bill is paid. It's not only because we need the money that we ask you to send us a check today. It is because we want *all* your business, and we want to quiet the little voice of conscience which might place some of it elsewhere."
 - (b) "Do you wish us to put the balance of \$7.60 due us on your account in the hands of the Credit Clearing

House for adjustment, with all the attendant publicity and undesirable results which must follow for you? Surely you can not afford to have us do this, and particularly not when you must acknowledge, if you consider the facts in the matter, that this balance is fairly due us."

(c) "You owe us \$6. It is necessary that we receive your remittance immediately or a specific statement as to the date we may expect payment. Will you therefore see that a check is sent by return mail? We assure you that it will be appreciated."

(d) "Do you believe that if you give a man an inch, he'll take a mile? We don't. In our experiences with the people of Greenville we have found that they appreciate service and credit such as we have extended to you. Surely you do not want us to believe we have been wrong in our optimism?"

15—What function would you assign to each letter in a series of four collection letters?

16—What reasons are there for using a draft in connection with a collection letter? What limitations on its usefulness?

17—Write a letter to a "good pay" customer in which you remind him of an overdue account and call attention to an attractive line of goods.

18—Write a series of four letters to a "slow-pay" customer.

19—Write a collection letter in which you appeal to the debtor's sense of fair play.

20—Write a letter to collect a small sum from a potentially good customer.

21—Write a series of three letters to collect the balance due on a young woman's account with a confectioner; after waiting in vain for the young woman to pay, try to collect the amount from her mother; from her father.

CHAPTER VI

1—Explain the six steps which are ordinarily taken in a good sales letter.

2—Trace the parallelism between a letter which follows this plan and a good salesman's selling talk.

3—Does an effective sales letter ever omit any of these six steps? Why?

4—What answer would you make to the man who insists that salesmanship is a gift and that any attempt to write good sales letters according to a formula is futile.

5—What answer would you make to the man who says that it destroys the spontaneity of his sales writing to follow a plan consciously?

6—What is meant by "the whip" as a device in sales letters?

7—Find three examples of "the whip" in sales letters and explain the value of the device in each case.

- 8—Write a sales letter in which you follow as closely as possible the six-step plan mentioned in the text-book.
- 10—Assuming that you own a canoe (or a rifle or a camera) for which you have no further use, write to three people who might care to buy it, varying the letter form as you think best to increase the effectiveness of each letter.

CHAPTER VII

- 1—Comment on the saying: "Get your reader safely past the first six words and his attention is yours."
- 2—What is the two-fold problem in starting sales letters?
- 3—Is this problem the same when the letter is written in answer to an inquiry and when it is sent unsolicited?
- 4—The formal vs. the personal beginning of a sales letter answering an inquiry.
- 5—What attention devices may be used in starting a sales letter?
- 6—What mechanical means may be used for displaying the beginning of a sales letter?
- 7—The pros and the cons of the display head in a sales letter.
- 8—Do you think one can ever begin a sales letter effectively by irritating the reader?
- 9—Compare the declarative, the command, and the question sentence for use at the beginning of a sales letter.
- 10—If it is possible to get attention and arouse interest at the same time, why do we recognize the special attention-getting devices at all?
- 11—Is it ever possible to employ only the description or explanation of your product to arouse the reader's interest? When?
- 12—Name five specific methods for arousing interest through the opening paragraph of a sales letter and submit a specimen not printed in the chapter to illustrate each one.
- 13—Whenever you catch some one in the act of throwing aside a sales letter, ask him why he is not interested; save the letters and study the way each begins.
- 14—Comment on the following opening paragraphs for sales letters:
- (a) "Maybe you prefer to pay more for your clothes than you need to pay. Some men do."
- (b) "When you go in to an important meeting you perhaps have dreams of the magic effect of your arguments—have carefully thought out WHAT you will say and HOW you will say it. Perhaps the simple words you chose at that one meeting will mold your whole business career; and you have visions of the dollars that will be yours rolling into your bank account. But do these dreams come true?"
- (c) "I think if I lived away from the seashore and somebody wrote me offering to send me fish right from

the boats, I'd be mighty pleased. I'd jump at the chance to get it."

- (d) "Do you know that exports to Latin-America are now running almost three times what they were a year ago? Do you know that shipments to Australasia, to the Far East, South Africa and to Europe are breaking all previous records?"
- (e) "'When they offer thee a heifer, run with a halter' was the homely advice once given by Sancho Panza to his master. And again: 'When good luck comes to thee, take it in.' Somewhat in the same vein would we advise you to welcome Blank's Essentials of Agriculture, of which we sent you a sample copy not long ago."

15—Rewrite the following opening paragraphs to give them greater attention and interest value:

- (a) "As you are now using electricity in your home, you undoubtedly will be interested in the many labor-saving and economical electrical appliances devised for your comfort and convenience." (A letter to housewives.)
- (b) "May we help you to guard against any interruption in your receipt of the Blank Magazine? We wish merely to advise that your subscription will expire with the delivery of three issues after the one you recently received, and to suggest that by filling out the form below you can insure there being no break in your subscription." (A letter to secure renewal subscriptions.)
- (c) "If you are thinking of a vacation in the West, don't you think a camping trip through Yellowstone Park via the indescribably beautiful Cody Road, would make an ideal outing for you?" (A letter to a teacher who wrote for a booklet.)

16—How would you begin a letter selling a handy volume dictionary to dealers; to students; to mothers; to lawyers; to ministers; to teachers?

CHAPTER VIII

- 1—How would you go about getting the information necessary for an effective description of an article which you wish to sell?
- 2—On what does the number and character of the details used in the descriptive section of a sales letter depend?
- 3—Give examples of the stressing of a product's distinctive features in sales literature.
- 4—Do you think the specific description is any more likely to be truthful than the one which is full of vague generalities?

- 5—Submit three examples (not given in the book) of sales descriptions which are phrased in a fresh, attractive way.
- 6—Submit two examples (not given in the book) of effective comparison used in describing the article offered for sale.
- 7—Rewrite the following paragraphs to give the description greater sales value:
 - (a) "Our shoes combine comfort with style and are unsurpassed for quality."
 - (b) "When you buy one of our hammocks, you get BIG value and BIG comfort."
 - (c) "These chairs are made of solid oak, upholstered in genuine leather, and modeled on the latest style."
- 8—How would you adapt your description in selling a dog to a boy, a mother, a bachelor, a hunter?
- 9—Describe a line of shirts so that it will appeal to young men, business men, farmers.
- 10—Write the descriptive section of a letter selling a typewriter to a business man, a stenographer, an engineer, a college student.

CHAPTER IX

- 1—Why must every claim in a sales letter be proved?
- 2—Name at least five kinds of proof commonly used in a sales letter.
- 3—Why is the testimonial "a two-edged weapon which must be handled skilfully to be effective?"
- 4—Name at least three essentials of a good testimonial.
- 5—When can the proof be presented best in an enclosure? What reference to the enclosure should then be made in the letter?
- 6—Submit a letter in which the writer's sincerity has much to do with making the letter convincing.
- 7—Submit two sales letters which are weak because of the lack of adequate proof of the writer's claims, and indicate the kind of proof needed in each.
- 8—Analyze three sales letters to show what kind of proof is used and how it is introduced.
- 9—Write a testimonial for a fountain pen (or a magazine) which would make good "ammunition" for a sales letter writer.
- 10—What sort of proof would you introduce into letters selling tennis shoes, kitchen cabinets, adding machines, novels, advertising space in a newspaper, tailored clothes, automobile tires, candy?

CHAPTER X

- 1—What is the secret of successful persuasion in a sales letter?
- 2—Why is exhortation a difficult and a dangerous form of persuasion?

- 3—Name several lines of business which lend themselves to selling by exhortation. Justify your answer.
- 4—Submit a sales letter in which you think exhortation is used effectively.
- 5—Explain the two ways in which persuasion of the second type works.
- 6—Find two letters not given in the textbook in which the writer seeks to persuade his reader by citing specific benefits to be derived from his proposition.
- 7—Find two examples of effective persuasion by suggestion.
- 8—Should the persuasive element of the letter always be concentrated in one paragraph?
- 9—Write a sales letter in which you do not confine your persuasive efforts to one paragraph. Check in the margin the places where you have introduced persuasion.
- 10—What do you think is the chief thing to guard against in handling the persuasive element of a sales letter?

CHAPTER XI

- 1—What trait of human nature makes it necessary ordinarily to reinforce one's sales appeal with an inducement?
- 2—Give as full a list as you can of specific inducements used in sales letters.
- 3—What do all these inducements have in common?
- 4—How does inducement differ from persuasion?
- 5—What precaution should be taken in using reduced price as an inducement?
- 6—How should the inducement be presented to be most effective?
- 7—Why is the offering of false inducements a poor business policy?

CHAPTER XII

- 1—What is the "vital essential that makes or kills a sales letter"?
- 2—What does the climax of a successful sales letter usually include?
- 3—How is the order blank useful in making the sales letter effective?
- 4—What are the essentials of a good order blank?
- 5—What special advantages may the guarantee blank and the numbered coupon have as order forms?
- 6—Name other ways of making ordering easy besides giving the reader something to sign.
- 7—Find three sales letters which you think end in a way to win business. Tell why you select them.
- 8—Do you favor ending a sales letter with a question? Why?
- 9—Will a long sentence or a short one usually be more effective at the end of a sales letter? Why?

- 10—Have you ever seen a postscript added to a carefully written sales letter? What was gained or lost by its use?
- 11—Discuss the use of a command at the end of a sales letter in connection with the following statement: “More men in a thousand will respond to a direct positive demand than to any known form of politely veiled suggestion.”
- 12—Tell which of the following you consider satisfactory endings for sales letters and rewrite those which you consider unsatisfactory.
- (a) “A few extra copies of this booklet are waiting here to be sent to those who’d like to have them. Merely write for one. It will come.”
 - (b) “Shall I look for you to come to the office or shall I bring a book of plans out to your farm”?
 - (c) “If you are interested in this kind of investment, please let us hear from you.”
 - (d) “Try us on a job. We won’t have to ask you again.”
 - (e) “Can you do better than to accept this fair offer? Telephone 781 and ask us to send a pair home for you.”
 - (f) “So many printers are making money with Abba that I really can’t understand your hesitation. While our flock is large, we can find room for another. I invite you once more to come in out of the rain. You’ve got to come, so why linger? Every day’s delay means a greater sacrifice than you think.”
- 13—Is the “—ing” construction likely to be effective at the end of a sales letter? Why?
- 14—Make a collection of stereotyped phrases which should not be used in closing a vigorous sales letter.

CHAPTER XIII

- 1—Explain the use of a follow-up series of letters in business.
- 2—How do general publicity letters differ from direct-sales follow-up letters?
- 3—Analyze a follow-up series which you find outside the textbook and discover the chief appeal of each letter.
- 4—How can the best order for the letters in a series be determined?
- 5—Is it a good idea to refer explicitly in each letter to the letters which have preceded it in the series?
- 6—What ideas have you about the length of the letters in a follow-up series?
- 7—How many letters are ordinarily sent out in one campaign series?
- 8—How much time should elapse between the letters of a follow-up series?
- 9—In what ways may the time when sales letters are mailed be significant?

- 10—How can the pulling power of sales letters be tested in advance? What precautions must be taken to make the results of such a test valuable?
- 11—Explain how sales letters can be keyed so that the replies from a campaign may be tabulated.
- 12—Tell what you can about the preparation and care of mailing lists.
- 13—Explain the usual routine for handling replies to a letter series.
- 14—Is it necessary to write individual letters in answering the inquiries brought in during a follow-up campaign?
- 15—How can form letters be made to approach the effectiveness of individual letters?
- 16—Why do many manufacturers furnish their dealers with form letters instead of mailing letters to prospective customers directly or leaving the dealer to follow up prospects in his own way?
- 17—Submit several letters furnished by manufacturers to their dealers as an aid in their promotion efforts. How are the dealers expected to use these letters?
- 18—Write a series of five follow-up letters, providing for a "split" with at least one letter.
- 19—Write a series of three letters which a dealer could send out to those whose names are referred to him by the manufacturer.

CHAPTER XIV

- 1—How does news increase the effectiveness of sales letters?
- 2—What two kinds of news can be used to give sales letters greater force?
- 3—Submit two examples of sales letters built around some live public topic.
- 4—Clip five stories from the current newspapers which you think could be given a sales twist.
- 5—Write a sales letter which is based on newspaper news for (a) a dealer in fire extinguishers: (b) a savings bank.
- 6—Submit three letters which are enlivened by trade news.
- 7—Write a sales letter for a grocer (or a milliner) into which you inject special interest by means of a piece of trade news.

CHAPTER XV

- 1—"Personality makes a letter dominate the morning's mail." Do you believe it? Can you cite instances to illustrate its truth?
- 2—Do you think a sales letter without personality is as ineffective as a salesman lacking in personality?
- 3—What does personality in a letter involve?

- 4—Can personality color every kind of a business letter? Should it?
- 5—Do you think that concreteness is likely to go along with personality?
- 6—Explain “the man-to-man attitude” in business letters.
- 7—What dangers may arise as one tries to put more personality into his letters?
- 8—Submit two sales letters not printed in the textbook which you think show business producing personality.
- 9—Rewrite the following letter to give it more personality:

Is the entertainment fund of your organization any larger now than it was when the present committee was appointed? Have you given your members all the entertainment desired? Have you made a better record than your predecessors? Have you done all that was expected of you? Have you been a success? If not, wouldn't now be an appropriate time to put on a vaudeville entertainment, give a mid-winter carnival, or something of this kind? Give your members something to look forward to; bring them closer together socially, and at the same time enlarge your entertainment fund.

We are thoroughly experienced in promoting all forms of entertainment and are in touch with the best talent obtainable. We can furnish you one act or an entire program. If you want singers, society dancers, musicians, vaudeville artists, or entertainers of any kind, drop us a line. All entertainment furnished by us is guaranteed to be high class in every respect.

Trust to have the pleasure of hearing from you and also of meeting you personally at some future time.

CHAPTER XVI

- 1—Why is the “you” element absolutely essential in a sales letter?
- 2—Can the “you” interest be injected into all kinds of business letters?
- 3—Is it enough to bring the “you” element into the opening paragraph of a letter?
- 4—Is it necessary to make “you” the first word of a letter in order to give the letter “you” interest?
- 5—Is it a good idea to make “you” the first word of every sales letter? To begin as many sentences as possible with “you”?
- 6—How does one learn to bring the “you” element into letters?
- 7—What do you make of the statement: “The application of the excellent idea involved in the ‘you’ attitude is most frequently violated by using the word ‘you’ ”?
- 8—Find a sales letter which has too much “we” in it and re-write so as to secure greater “you” interest.

CHAPTER VIII

EXAMINATIONS

Instructors facing widely different problems in business correspondence instruction here supply specimen examinations which they have found effective. Note the relative importance attached to a summary of required readings, general information, knowledge of theory, skill and judgment.

As far as possible the sources for the answers to these questions are given so that any teacher desiring to use them in his class work can give his students reliable and satisfactory references.

A—ON

CLASS ROOM DISCUSSIONS AND

HOW TO WRITE BUSINESS LETTERS

One-Hour Examination

- 1—Show by diagram a well-balanced arrangement of a business letter and explain why you consider the arrangement effective. *8 points*
- 2—Write a letter of application for a new position and explain the principles which you employed in its construction. *8 points*
- 3—Under what conditions may post cards and stamped envelopes be redeemed? ¹ *12 points*
- 4—List the four classes of purchasing letters. *8 points*
- 5—Discuss the elements of the typical answer to the complaint letter. *8 points*
- 6—Explain the fundamental difference between sales and collection letters. *8 points*
- 7—What are the order-getting elements in a sales letter? *8 points*
- 8—Discuss the merits or demerits of the following sales descriptions:

¹ See Chap. VI.

"This material is absolutely without question the finest material on the market today. This statement will be substantiated by tens of thousands of users."

"You could forge a first class razor from one of our taps, and the razor would cut smooth and clean for the same reason that the tap does—'twould have the right stuff in it."

"Nothing will effectually take the place of the good old cedar chest, with its clean, sweet, pungent aroma so dear to the heart of the old-fashioned housewife."

"To See and To Know and TO HAVE everything beautiful and stylish. That is the opportunity the 'National' Spring Style Book brings to you. To see all the new styles in all the new materials. There are all the new flowered materials, patterns that grandmother wore—and there are gathered skirts and tunic skirts and over-skirts, and all the old time ruffles and flounces and frills have been artistically applied to Spring's new Styles."

10 points

9—Explain the value of a test of sales-follow-up letters.

6 points

10—Where can you obtain names for mailing lists? ²

12 points

11—Discuss briefly the importance of personality in correspondence.

8 points

12—What do you consider the primary advantages which you secured from this course?

4 points

Three-Hour Examination

1—(a) How is the "personal tone" secured in a business letter?

7 points

(b) Give a list of some of the stereotyped forms and expressions to be avoided in a business letter.

7 points

2—(a) Name the chief points that should be brought out in a letter of application.

5 points

(b) What elements should be included in a customer letter ordering goods?

4 points

(c) Write a letter ordering at least three different items.

3 points

3—(a) Discuss the attitude of the writer of a letter answering a complaint, when the house is not at fault and the complainant's claim is refused.

7 points

(b) Name and discuss briefly the three elements composing a letter answering a complaint.

7 points

4—(a) Name four elements found in a collection letter.

7 points

(b) Name four kinds of personal appeals that may be used in collection letters. Illustrate one of them by writing a brief paragraph that could be used in an actual letter.

7 points

5—(a) Discuss in some detail the three methods of beginning a sales letter. Give the advantages and disadvantages of each.

9 points

² See Chap. V.

- (b) Name four typical kinds of proof in a sales letter. Discuss the use of testimonials. 7 points
- 6—(a) How does "persuasion" differ from "inducement" in a sales letter? 5 points
- (b) Write a closing paragraph for a sales letter illustrating the use of the "clincher." 4 points
- (c) Explain how a "test" for sales letters is conducted. 3 points
- 7—Write a brief letter answering a complaint (the house is not at fault, but the complainant's claim is granted). 18 points

B-ON

MISCELLANEOUS WORKS AND REFERENCES

One-Hour Examination

- 1—How can the paragraphing of a letter be made to help in (a) getting the letter read; ³ (b) getting the letter understood; ⁴ (c) getting the reader to act? ⁵ 10 points
- 2—Why are superlatives often "banned for the good of the service"? ⁶ 5 points
- 3—(a) Explain the steps in the *System* formula for a sales letter; ⁷ (b) for a collection letter. ⁸ 10 points
- 4—Analyze the writer's problem in the letter refusing to adjust a complaint as the customer has urged. ⁹ 10 points
- 5—Discuss the effectiveness of the two accompanying letters in terms of our outline. ¹⁰ 20 points
- 6—A is employed as a correspondent in a Chicago business office and feels the need of more training. After reading the announcement of an English course in a school circular he writes to the director (B) in order to find out whether the course will really meet his needs. B acknowledges his letter and then refers it to C, the instructor in charge of the English course, for fuller attention. Write A's letter to B, B's letter to A, and C's letter to A. 45 points

³ Based on instructor's lectures. See Smart, W. K., (Editor) "How to Write Business Letters," p. 67.

⁴ Same.

⁵ Same.

⁶ See p. 53.

⁷ See Smart, W. K. (Editor) "How to Write Business Letters," Chap. VI.

⁸ See "How to Collect Money by Mail," p. 19.

⁹ Based on instructor's lectures. Briefly, the writer's problem is to give the customer less than he wants and still keep his good will; often the writer has to resell the article to the customer. On the general subject of adjustment letters read in *The Business Correspondence Library*, "Handling the Long-Distance Customer." Chaps. LXVII-LXIX, and Gardner, E. H., "Effective Business Correspondence," Chap. IX.

¹⁰ Letters used which the class presumably had not seen before and which illustrated plainly a number of points emphasized in the instructor's lectures.

Two-Hour Examination

Note: Answers should be given in the briefest terms possible. You are allowed to take the questions in any order. Please number each carefully. At least seven questions, including the first and second, are to be answered. No one should hand in his work as completed before the two hours are up.

- 1—State briefly, but with exactness, the six principles of business correspondence as they have been developed during the course, and show how each principle is based independently on the psycho-physical reaction.¹¹
- 2—What do you understand by “personality in business letters”?¹²
- 3—Name and explain the parts of a standard sales letter. Illustrate by a short original letter on any subject of your own choosing.¹³
- 4—Punctuate the following:
 Im on your list as a prospect for a seven room house
 You tell me that the house you have is exactly what I
 want and you ought to know for I gave you the specifica-
 tions myself You have explained that the foundation is
 solid the building itself sound and well built But I hesi-
 tate afraid that something may be wrong perhaps the
 foundation sags or the walls bulge¹⁴
- 5—In brief sentences define (1) alphabetical filing;¹⁵ (2) geographical filing;¹⁶ (3) testing;¹⁷ (4) keying;¹⁸ (5) follow-up;¹⁹ (6) automatic correspondence.²⁰
- 6—List the possible sources (books, magazines, and the like) where correspondence information is to be obtained.²¹
- 7—Suppose payment for your text books one month over due. What would be a fair “first” collection letter to send out?²²
- 8—A man bought an \$8 pair of Oxfords. After wearing them two weeks, he asks for a complete refund, “because the shoes don’t break in.” Sketch a letter that would adjust the complaint.²³
- 9—Give a careful analysis of the sales coupon or order card.²⁴
- 10—Show by diagrams, or by a brief explanation, the place of business correspondence in the general business field.²⁵

¹¹ See p. 38.

¹² See Smart, W. K. (Editor) “How to Write Business Letters,” Chap. XV; *The Business Correspondence Library*, Chap. II.

¹³ See Smart, W. K. (Editor) “How to Write Business Letters,” Chap. VI.

¹⁴ Based upon lectures.

¹⁵ Based upon lectures.

¹⁶ Based upon lectures.

¹⁷ See *The Business Correspondence Library*, Chap. XXXVII.

¹⁸ See *The Business Correspondence Library*, Chap. XXXVI.

¹⁹ See *The Business Correspondence Library*, Chap. XXVI.

²⁰ See “The Automatic Letter Writer.”

²¹ Based upon lectures. See Chap. V.

²² See *The Business Correspondence Library*, Chaps. LXI-LXVI.

²³ Based upon lectures and *The Business Correspondence Library*, Chaps. LXVII-LXXI.

²⁴ Based upon lectures.

²⁵ Based upon lectures.

(Questions used in three successive examinations of three hours each)

FIRST EXAMINATION

- 1—A writes in the name of his organization (University Alumni Association, City Boosters' Club, Retailers' Association, or Equal Suffrage League) asking B, a fellow member, to render a specific service to the organization. B replies with warmth, refusing this service because he disapproves of some action or policy of the organization; A writes again trying to restore good will and secure B's active co-operation. Make the problem specific in your own mind and then write A's letters. 50 points
- 2—How would you answer the business man who says: "Who cares how a letter is punctuated or how it is placed on the page? What the letter says is the main thing."²⁶ 10 points
- 3—(a) Name five ways of "displaying" the beginning of a business letter.²⁷
 (b) Name four distinct functions of the dash in business style.²⁸
 (c) Bring out six ways in which the question sentence is psychologically valuable in business correspondence.²⁹ 15 points
- 4—A company manufacturing electrical specialties has written to a dealer urging him to take the agency for its line. While the dealer is considering the proposition he received from the company a sample machine which was defective. He writes back in disgust that he can not possibly take any orders with such a sample. The company's response follows:

"We are sending you by freight today our latest Gem Electric Wash Machine. We have made arrangements with the railroad company to send this with other *specials* and it should reach you by Friday morning. Our demonstrator will leave here Thursday night and will be ready to give demonstrations in your store as soon as the machine arrives. If you will return the machine you now have, we will allow you \$30 for transportation charges and other expenses.

"We are doing this because we want your business as well as our own to increase. Every Gem we ever sold has given entire satisfaction.

"On investigation we find that the machine originally sent you left our factory in first class condition.

²⁶ See Chap. III. On the general subject read "Sales Correspondence," Chap. VI.

²⁷ Based upon lectures. Briefly, short sentence or phrase centered on page; use of capitals; extra spacing between first and second lines (headline effect); underlining; red lettering.

²⁸ Based upon lectures. Briefly, to indicate a sudden break in the construction; to create suspense; to give effect of colloquial ease; to show incompleteness.

²⁹ Based upon lectures. Briefly, attention; courtesy; interest; fairness; directness; informality.

Our foreman, who has been in our employ for twenty years, told us that he selected a wringer with a double lever and fastened it to the machine himself. In order to have it get to you in the shortest possible time, he shipped over a new route. Sending it over this road undoubtedly accounts for the damage, for we never had a complaint when machines were sent over the old road.

"If this new machine does not suit you, let us know at once."

What is the essential psychology of this letter problem? Do you consider the company's letter effective? Why? What specific suggestions can you make for increasing its effectiveness? 25 points

SECOND EXAMINATION

- 1—Discuss the problem of writing letters to sell one's own services with reference to the following specimen:

Chicago, Ill., Nov. 20, 1914.

Mr.
Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

Professor of the University, of which institution the writer is a graduate, has just informed me of the vacancies in the branch offices of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. Believing that the character of my training has been such as to enable me efficiently to qualify for this work, I am pleased to present herewith a list of the courses which I studied at the University, and which are also among the requirements of your department. Briefly, this training has been in the fields of economics, geography and modern languages.

The character of my work along these lines may be indicated by the fact of my election, in my Junior year, to the honorary society Phi Beta Kappa.

At present the writer is engaged by the largest clothing house in the United States in making a study of climatic oscillations with a view to correlating the results of this study with fluctuations in sales.

Should this application meet with your favor, I should be pleased to submit for your consideration, detailed recommendations of the very highest character, compiled by the University after careful investigations and covering all my activities for a number of years.

Trusting that I may be favored with an early reply, I am
Yours respectfully,

15 points

- 2—When, according to Professor Scott, should one use argument and when suggestion in attempting to influence people to act? ³⁰ 10 points
- 3—What, according to Mr. Page, are the five rules to follow in compiling a mailing list? ³¹ 5 points

³⁰ See Scott, W. D., "Influencing Men in Business," Chaps. V and VI.

³¹ See Page, W. K., "The Preparation and Care of Mailing Lists," Chap. IV.

- 4—The imitation letter vs. the printed substitute. *10 points*
- 5—What seem to you the most serious causes of ineffectiveness in the use of form letters? Name at least five causes and explain specifically.³² *10 points*
- 6—Write the letter which you would use in meeting *one* of the following problems:
- (a) A grocer in a small city wants to combat a growing tendency in his community for people to buy from the large mail-order houses.
 - (b) A large printing and engraving company has established a business library and wants to induce its employees to use it.
 - (c) A chamber of commerce wants to double its membership. An ambitious program laid out. City of 50,000 or over. *35 points*
- 7—Discuss the following sales form,³³ bringing out the specific points of its effectiveness or ineffectiveness:

If this letter were printed on a ten dollar bill, it could scarcely be more valuable to you than the message it now contains.

For it offers to place in the hands of a few large manufacturers, almost without cost, a copy of the greatest MANUFACTURERS' TEXT BOOK ever issued in America—a book that contains complete and specific office, sales and factory schemes for increasing a business like yours, a book that actually outlines in charted form over 30 factory and selling plans that have built up giant businesses.

In one chapter alone in this book there is a cost system all worked out, that saved one large concern \$96,000 in factory expense in less than a single year. In another chapter the sales manager of a typewriter company gives a complete new system for managing a sales force. Yet these are only two out of thirty articles, all equally valuable.

It tells how to stir up and enthuse your sales force; how to keep factory costs; how to advertise, promote and market your articles; how, in fact, to cut down expenses and increase profits. It is a gold mine of business building ideas.

And, remember, the book is free. To each of the first one thousand manufacturers subscribing to we will send a cloth bound copy of this splendid 300-page book without charge. And even the magazine is no expense, for surely the \$2.00 you pay for it will come back to you many times over before you read one-half of the 12 issues.

But you must act now—only 2700 copies of this book remain on hand and live manufacturers will snap up this offer. So pin your money to this letter and mail to us today.

15 points

THIRD EXAMINATION

- 1—Give Mr. Fisk's ideas about "Building up Retail Trade by Mail," or Mr. McJohnston's ideas on "Selling by Mail to Farmers." *Discuss.*³⁴ *15 points*
- 2—Name the characteristics of a good credit system; of a good

³² Based on instructor's lectures and class discussions. Among the causes to be mentioned are absence of individualized appeal; cheap appearance; undue length; flat or sensational style; inaccuracies in mailing list.

³³ Illustrative letter used in a reference which class had been asked to read and hence should recognize.

³⁴ See "Sales Correspondence," Chaps. X and XIII.

collection system. Discuss the problem of making collection forms effective with reference to the series of six letters submitted.³⁵ *25 points*

- 3—Your services are engaged by the publisher of a new dictionary which is especially suited for use by college students. He has decided to sell the dictionary through dealers and has set the price at \$2.75. Outline a direct advertising campaign which will include all the leading colleges and universities. Indicate specifically the number of mailing pieces you propose and the content of each piece. Prepare the copy for one letter and one folder-insert. *60 points*

³⁵ Based on instructor's lectures. Read Gardner, E. H., "Effective Business Correspondence," Chaps. X and XI.

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